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THE

WITNESS OF THE WORLD TO CHRIST

BY THE

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THE

WITNESS OF THE WORLD TO CHRIST.

CHAPTER I.

PREFATORY.

In venturing to put forth the following thoughts a warning has been forcibly borne in upon the writer's mind, which has been made familiar in the words of the Laureate :—

> "Thou pratest here where thou art least;
> This faith hath many a purer priest,
> And many an abler voice than thou."

And he would ask his readers to believe that he does not profess to do more than direct attention to some considerations which may serve to throw a little light on a subject of which the difficulties and the vastness are fully realised. It is far from his intention to presume to clear up all doubts or difficulties connected with it, or to dogmatise upon the relations of reason towards

revelation, or the position that the one should take up towards the other. And it may be as well to indicate at once what part of the wide field of investigation that seems opened out to us it is purposed to approach.

That there is a widespread feeling prevalent in these days that reason is in some way antagonistic to revealed truth — that the fresh discoveries of modern research, and the better conclusions to which the progress of science has advanced, have cut away the ground on which Christian theology rests—must be known to all who are at all familiar with the currents of modern thought. And there are probably few who do not also know the pain and distress of incertitude that this very assumption causes to most minds, who are unwilling to plunge into the chaos of unbelief which seems the only alternative for those who forsake the sure ground of a divine revelation on which to build their faith, and yet are fearful to rest all their hopes upon a foundation which is so generally assumed to be visionary and delusive.

Circumstances pressed these considerations forcibly home to the writer in early life, when called to prepare himself for ordination at the very time when this question was first assuming the prominence it has held in this generation,

and was most keenly debated. The supposed contradiction of reason and science to revealed truth was forced upon him by peculiar circumstances with very painful distinctness, so that he had to satisfy himself with careful thought whether the antagonism was real or only assumed, whether there was anything in the conclusions of reason or the course of modern science which in any real way or to any important extent contradicted the revelation on which the Christian faith is based. The conclusion to which he was then led was that the witness afforded by the world of facts with which our reason can deal to the truth of Christianity was far more real than any discrepancy or contradiction which might be discovered between them.

And after many years of subsequent experience in the application of revealed truth to the varied needs of human nature in ministerial life, he ventures to submit the conclusions at which he arrived, and the considerations which chiefly weighed with him in the long course of thought to which this difficulty at the outset led, in hope that perhaps in some degree these considerations and conclusions may prove a stay to minds which, like the writer's own, for many such there may be, have ever felt bewildered with the seeming conflict between the great

principles of reason and faith, which we can in neither case afford to suppress, diminish, or discard.

Believing firmly, as the writer of these pages does believe, and the more firmly as he is able to give the more consideration to them both, that all true science is the interpretation of one set of divinely-given truths—the "*vox Dei in rebus revelata*"—the voice of God declared in matters of fact; and that all true theology is the interpretation of a voice of God declared by the mouth of His servants the prophets—he feels that any note of discord between the two must be so distressful to any reverent mind, that aught which tends to restore the lost harmony may be made welcome.

Πᾶν τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστιν. If this world is the work of an intelligent Creator, there can be no antecedent improbability in His making a revelation of Himself to His creatures, if they are gifted with intelligence to apprehend it. But it passes the widest bounds of probability that such a revelation should contradict the facts and laws of His work of creation, or that these should be incompatible with the truths as revealed by the Creator's own chosen methods of communication to His creatures.

The science which teaches men of God should

have nothing to fear but everything to hope from the development of any science which teaches fresh truths of His works, while any true physical science should offer no coldness of suspicion but a warm welcome to any added light that offers to illuminate mysteries of the origin of the world which the tentative steps of human reason are precluded from exploring. We all, whether students of natural or revealed truth, are groping our onward way to perfect light. And whatsoever doth make manifest aught that to either is yet dark, is light that we well may hail, even if its rays penetrate to us from without the chamber of our own special study.

How the discord has arisen, why there should be the jealousy which we see between the students of nature and revelation, is too deep a question for us here to fathom, though we may find some light break in even on this point as we proceed. But that it does exist will hardly be questioned. It must be admitted, as within every one's knowledge, that there is in the present day a general assumption that science and Christianity are antagonistic to each other; that modern discoveries have cut away from under us most of the ground on which the faith of a Christian rests, and the more perfect conclusions of modern

thought have rendered untenable the distinctive doctrines of theology.

That is indeed so generally assumed that men accept it as proved, without any inquiry into the nature of the proof, or the grounds on which the assumption rests. Many will indeed so accept it that they decline to look into the proper claims or evidences of Christianity at all, while others, unwilling to forsake their faith, take refuge from the need of inquiring into the grounds on which it rests, and are content with basing it upon a mere vague sentiment of reverence, rather than on any rational understanding of what revelation professes to set forth, or claims to rest upon. It will be the object of these pages to endeavour to show that there is no reality in this assumption, that any seeming contradiction of reason to Christian truth is neither necessary nor well founded; but that, on the contrary, there is abundant testimony in the experience of the world to the necessity of a divine revelation and to the reality of that communication which Christianity embodies as divinely made, compared with which any seeming contradictions or discrepancies as to minor facts and mere collateral incidents are absolutely unimportant.

CHAPTER II.

SCIENCE AND THEOLOGY.

NOTHING is more commonly delusive than to take as proved what is generally assumed. Perhaps there never has been any noxious error or pernicious delusion in the whole history of human thought which has not been so generally assumed at some period of the world's progress that few have thought it necessary to inquire into its reality, until some Coifi has been found to go up boldly to smite the idol of popular belief, and has proved it to be a mere wooden delusion. The fact of a general assumption proves nothing as to its truth. An antagonism there may be between the science of any one period and the theology of that day, which may be a radical and irreconcilable one, or a very small matter, hardly worth the consideration of practical men, who live in a world of contradictions and perplexities, of which not the least are matters of our every day experience, that cause to no rational man any real difficulty

in settling for himself, or disregarding altogether. So there may be a real antagonism between science and revelation present in many minds that have endeavoured to ascertain the truth of the matter, which yet may prove nothing. For the scope of the highest human intelligence is very limited, unable to grasp more than a small portion of the facts or the laws either of the natural world or of revealed truth. And since each mind can see truth natural or revealed only as presented to its own limited vision, or as elucidated by the age in which each may live and think, it follows that an antagonism there may be, real to each thinker, which a wider and fuller comprehension of both the subjects would prove to have no foundation in the necessary conditions of things.

But it is to be marked that this antagonism so generally assumed is especially modern. Why is this? In part it no doubt arises from the countless number of new facts which have been ascertained by modern research, so as to compel the remodelling of nearly all branches of physical science. The spirit of inquiry has been so active, and the means of investigation so enlarged of late years, that a perfect wealth of knowledge has been poured upon us as to natural facts, and thus the means of ascertain-

ing the laws of nature have been extended within the last two generations to proportions quite unknown by mankind before. That therefore the conclusions of science have been vastly altered under these changed conditions is inevitable. And the ground on which the current *à priori* infidelity of the day generally rests, is that these discoveries of modern science have been found so to contradict in essentials the Christian faith, that that must go down before them.

But let us look a little more closely into this presumption to see exactly what it amounts to. Is it merely that the laws of nature have been so widely investigated of late years, that the number of discoveries freshly brought to light has compelled students of nature largely to modify their own prior conclusions, and as those were supposed to be in harmony with the doctrines of theology, the latter must be abandoned also? Or is it that because theology has not progressed *pari passu* with other sciences, she has become antiquated and may be superseded? Or is it contended that any single discovery has been made by modern science which has so flatly contradicted any of the essential principles of revelation that these latter have become untenable? Certainly

this contention cannot be maintained. If any one direct proof had been established that there is not and cannot be a God, if the progress of the sciences had in any way disproved the possibility of there being an intelligent Creator of the universe or a ruler of the world of men in righteousness, then there might be something in the current presumption of infidelity. But there is no sane student of science who will venture to say that a single fact has been brought to light that offers any such proof. Take for instance the doctrine that is perhaps most relied upon by opponents of revelation, the doctrine of evolution. In the first place it is not itself proved—at the most it has only been shown to be probable, which is a very different thing. For the great crucial test which alone would prove it is as yet lacking—the power to point to any one instance, distinctly established, of one species passing into another species, which all research has as yet entirely failed to discover.

But suppose that the doctrine of evolution were proved to the full extent of its own claims, what does it claim? Simply to account for the origin of species; and the origin of genera would remain still as much unaccounted for as now, and must be ascribed to a creative intelli-

gence. Or even suppose that evolution could be pressed to account for the origin of genera, to satisfy the wildest dreams of its votaries, so that the descent of man could be traced back to a germ of protoplasm clinging to some meteoric fragment of a prior world, that became attracted to this planet, and throve and propagated in it. What then? Would that fact in the slightest degree do away with the evident marks of design in creation that to most rational minds bespeak an intelligent Creator? Or would it not rather intensify and enhance them, as much as the works of one of those wonderful clocks to be seen in some foreign cathedrals, which, once wound up, will go on for weeks, showing the days and hours and minutes and seconds, with the movements of the sun and moon and planets, the lunar and solar years, and processions of weird figures to strike the hours, are greater proofs in the complexity of their mechanism of intelligent design than a countryman's watch, which has to be wound up nightly, and put back or forward every few hours to keep it with the time of the day? It cannot be said that a single fact has been adduced by modern research which contradicts the statements of revelation that this world was the work of a

creative intelligence. Nor is there any legitimate conclusion to be drawn from the facts ascertained by science which in any essential particular disproves the further statements as to how the work was designed and carried out.

We must ever bear in mind that there is the widest possible distinction between the facts witnessed to by the scriptural record, or the plain statements of Revelation, and the interpretation which we may have been accustomed to place upon those facts, or the traditions that have been associated in our minds with them; or even again the rhetorical and figurative modes of expression with which they may have been clothed as set forth to us. And if the conclusions be proved to which modern science seems to point, they are found at the most to contradict some preconceived notions which we have been used to read into the simple statements of Revelation, or traditional modes which we have accepted of interpreting it. But that cannot surely be said to militate against the truth of the Revelation itself. We might go further, and say that even if the text of Revelation were convicted of inaccuracies as to some matters of detail, that of itself would no more disprove the truth of any essential matters revealed than the fact of inaccuracies being

detected in Lord Clarendon's "History of the Rebellion", would prove that there was no civil war in England. But it is not necessary for us to fall back so far as this. The most that can be said of the destructive tendencies of modern thought is that if the progress of science does contradict anything, it is not the truth of any essential particular that Revelation asserts, but a mass of traditional interpretations, and not a few traditional misconceptions, that we have been accustomed to interweave with it. If we are obliged to discard some of these interpretations, and to clear away some misconceptions, that no more involves any disproof of revealed truth than the fact that geologists have had within the last generation to discard some of the conclusions to which their predecessors most fondly clung may be taken to prove that there is no such thing as a stratum or a fossil.

What is there that Revelation asserts which science even professes to contradict? As the basis of all subsequent truths, we have a simple statement laid down, that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Has the slightest proof ever yet been offered to show that He did not? No science can possibly profess to traverse such a statement; and if true, it throws light upon a number of phenomena

which without it are very difficult to understand. From that one fundamental truth Revelation proceeds to sketch a course of progressive development from a primary nebulous condition of matter through well-defined stages up to the appearance of the highest organisms on the earth, where the work of creation is arrested.

Is there anything in this which science contradicts? On the contrary, is it not exactly what all observation and research substantiate? The ultimate origin of the matter that we perceive in the visible universe is a thing on which no ratiocination or research can ever profess to throw light. Indeed it is so entirely removed from any observation or induction of which we are capable, that any attempt of the sort must resolve itself into pure speculation quite beyond the province of any true science. And the same may be said of the ultimate origin of force. The conclusion to which the course of all scientific observation seems to tend is that all the complex phenomena of the natural world are due to simple original causes, which, however first set in motion, have been working through a progressive series of well-marked evolutionary stages, from the first nebulous condition to which we may trace back primary matter up to a point where all further evolution has been arrested. And that, stated in a simple

way for unscientific but imaginative Oriental people, is exactly what the first records of Revelation affirm. The nebulous matter out of which this visible order of the universe was formed, may itself have been the debris of former organised world-systems, as astronomy now appears to indicate. This is nowhere contradicted in Revelation; on the contrary, the expression which we translate "without form and void" does in the original imply the sense of wasteness and desolation, as of systems before existing and reduced to disorganisation. For the purpose of the revelation that was made this is a point wholly immaterial, and therefore left without any attempt at elucidation.

The great facts which alone are material to that purpose are plainly and simply stated: that the elements of which this κόσμος is composed were once in a nebulous and disorganised condition; the fiat of a creative intelligence called them into being first, and then placed them under the active operation of forces which evolved by successive stages the complex world-system that we have around us. In this Revelation is strictly at one with the conclusions of science; and in comparison with that striking harmony any verbal criticisms or minor discrepancies are absolutely unimportant.

What length of time may have elapsed in the period passed over in silence between the epochs indicated in the first and second verses of Genesis, and how many world-systems may have been evolved and brought to disorganisation before fresh force, acting on the matter of which the world is made, began to reorganise it—how many other world-systems there may be beyond our ken, and beyond the one planetary system revolving round our sun, of which alone our revelation speaks—what length of time may be attributed to each cycle of evolution which according to a well-known usage of Hebrew diction is called a "day" of creation, or whether we are to understand that at the beginning of each such cycle (which, for anything that revelation asserts to the contrary, may have been long enough to satisfy the wildest demands of geologists upon our credit) in some one distinct revolution of the earth upon its axis there was a special interposition of creative power, "and God said" the word which caused a fresh starting point of evolutionary power for that stage of the world's progress—how many types of organised life were formed and had their day before the steady selection of natural causes determined the fittest to survive—all these are questions

lying quite outside the proper scope of revelation.

And therefore they are passed over in silence. We may have formed notions on these points, or inherited traditional interpretations that profess to expand the statements revealed. But if we regard any speculations which may propose to clear them up from other points of view as contradicting revelation, we are making ourselves suicidally unscientific interpreters, for we make it incumbent on us to defend, not what divine revelation actually states, but what we should *à priori* expect it to state, or what traditional interpretations have read into it, which are totally different things. All that we can do, or that we ought legitimately to attempt, is to take the plain statements revealed as facts, established on the evidence of inspired recorders, and then draw the conclusions which properly follow from those statements with any other known facts which bear upon the subject of our investigation.

But if it is not the case that any discoveries of modern science can be said to contradict the essential truths of revelation, such as the existence of an intelligent Creator, or the declared law of a moral ruler of the world, is there any more weight in the argument that as the sciences

of old were deemed compatible with the teaching of theology, and their conclusions have been superseded by the course of modern thought, therefore theology must be held discredited with them?

Is that a fair argument? Surely all that the discovery of fresh facts and laws in the observed universe really proves is that science is essentially progressive, and no finality is possible in it. Nothing is more clear than that the accepted dogmas of science in any one epoch are constantly modified or set aside in the next, by the inevitable progress of discovery or by discrepancies which compel us to suspend judgment till they be cleared up.

The accepted dogmas of geology now are different from those which were most fully believed fifty years ago, and may themselves be set aside in another fifty years by further observation. Again, science is not always clear with herself; as, for instance, geology to-day demands for the working out of her laws a duration of time, millions of years passed under the same conditions as now prevail, which the experts of a sister science, astronomy, assert to have been impossible. The only conclusion that we can rationally come to is that science is so essentially progressive that no student who recognises her

necessary conditions could at once reject the whole group of facts and conclusions which form the province of any one study, like theology, because they may seem at variance with the conclusions of any other special study, or of scientific thought generally at any one epoch.

At least it would be utterly unscientific to do so. The most you can fairly argue in such a case is to say: Here be facts which in different fields of thought seem to point to very different conclusions, and laws which on their own ground seem sufficiently established, yet are difficult to reconcile with each other. All that a fair mind can conclude is that the clue to the secret is not yet found, and we must leave the solution to the further progress of inquiry and thought; knowing that the discovery of a single additional fact, or any group of facts newly ascertained, may at any time supply that clue, and guide us to a higher general law than any yet established, which may be found to harmonise all seeming discrepancies.

And if this be so with scientific progress, then to say that at the present stage of knowledge and research some facts recently brought to light in the natural world appear to conflict, either with conclusions that have been hitherto gene-

rally accepted in theology, or with some statements of revealed truth, proves nothing necessarily against either. For no one, unless he be the veriest charlatan, will say that science has exhausted all the possible facts that may be discovered; or that the laws which modern science lays down are so established that no more exhaustive research into nature, no more perfect induction, can ever compel us to modify them. In the progressive state of science, any seeming conflict between the facts or laws of any one study and those of another can do no more than prove to us (if we find nothing faulty in the processes of either) that we must wait for further light to be thrown on one or both before we can arrive at that perfect understanding which alone enables us to decide conflicting claims or harmonise apparent discrepancies.

But then we are met with another current objection, that because science, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, is so essentially progressive, constantly adding fresh facts to its stores of knowledge, and widening the range of its conclusions, while Christian theology is not thus progressive, but remains constant to the system of truth which it has enunciated for centuries, therefore the two are incompatible, and the one cannot recognise the other.

Surely such an assumption proceeds upon a total misconception of what Christian theology claims to be, as essentially based upon a revelation. The facts which are its groundwork are those of a history of events which happened at definite times long ago, or have been made known by particular exponents of a divine message to man. Unless fresh facts happen of the sort, or a further revelation is made bearing upon the subject, no progress can from the nature of the case be looked for in theology.

Indeed it is not probable that any fresh facts should be brought to light regarding the life of Christ or the history of the chosen nation. It is true that as historic research is carried further we may find incidental illustrations of both, and as a fact the most remarkable corroborations have been lately supplied, by explorations in Palestine, Egypt, Assyria, and the other lands that were the early homes of civilising man, to the truth of the Bible narrative. But while vivid illustrations and corroborations have been thus given of scriptural scenes and incidents, no one material fact has been brought to light that either adds to our store of revealed truth or compels us to modify the conclusions of Christian theology.

And as to any fresh revelation, it would be

going too far to say that if divine truth has ever been revealed no further light ever can or will be given to man. But certainly no communication ever has been made since the closing of the Canon of Scripture which purports to be a further revelation in connection with Christianity. So that to expect theology to be progressive in the same way as other sciences necessarily are shows a total ignorance of its essential conditions. Error there may have been at times in men's conclusions from these facts, historic and revealed, which are its basis, and a progress towards a better understanding of them. But if the facts are once properly ascertained in their true proportions and due relation to each other, and conclusions rightly drawn from them, it is as irrational to find fault with the dogmas of Christianity for not being "progressive" as it would be to challenge the law of gravitation or the dogma of the revolution of the earth round the sun, on the ground that those were old theories which had not marched with the general progress of the times.

When once truth has been definitely established on facts fully ascertained, no change is possible except in the direction of error, and that is the true answer to the popular pseudo-scientific objections against the so-called dog-

matic teaching of Christianity. What, after all, is dogma, that modern thought should make so bitterly merry against it? The very thing on which every other science relies as the basis of accuracy within its own province. *Δόγμα* = received opinion; that which *δέδοκται*, has approved itself as right, to the body of those qualified to judge. Is not that the very tribunal to which every science appeals in its own province—the *consensus* of experts? And is not their verdict taken as conclusive on all points that come within their branch of study, so long as they are incapable of direct or mathematical proof; or, at all events, held to be the only judgment that we can regard as approaching to certainty. He must be strong in the possession of new data or improved methods of reasoning who would venture to set himself against such a verdict, or he must be a fool. And even if new facts are brought to light, or if the process of reasoning upon acknowledged truths is shown to be fallacious, then the appeal is still to the same tribunal, and the general *consensus* of those qualified to judge must decide as to the retention or modification of the conclusions. Any particular dogma of one period may thus cease to be a dogma when the opinion ceases to be received and another takes its place. But

"dogma" in itself is the only thing we can rely upon for certainty in any science, to which theology is no exception. For when truth is once established upon premises fully ascertained, no change is possible except to error.

CHAPTER III.

REASON AND REVELATION.

If then there is nothing in the ascertained facts of modern science that contradicts the essential teaching of revelation, is there any foundation for the common assumption that because the conditions of scientific thought have vastly altered in late years, and laws have been established which were unknown before, in times when theology was supposed to be in accord with a state of science which better methods of modern laws of thought have superseded, therefore theology must be dismissed as untenable? Or that because much of the groundwork on which our belief in a revelation rests is of a kind that physical science cannot investigate, therefore the whole idea of a revelation, properly so-called, must be *à priori* improbable? That is a very common position of the current infidelity of the day, and we must endeavour to meet it fairly and fully.

Where do the proper functions of reason and revelation meet? where do they end? and how far do they overlap each other, so that any conflict is possible? Properly, no antagonism can find place between them, for they move in different spheres which are complementary to each other. Reason is the faculty by which knowledge is apprehended by the human mind, whether in the natural or spiritual world. Revelation is professedly a communication from another world of things not cognisable by human senses; which nevertheless, when once communicated, are to be apprehended by the ordinary process of reasoning.

If therefore the functions of the two are rightly understood they hardly can come into collision, for the one only begins where the other ends. Reason takes up matters communicated by revelation, and assimilates them, as it were, in the understanding of man. Revelation professedly only comes into play to communicate matters, which without such communication human reason cannot arrive at, because it has not sufficient data to go upon.

Now theology is the science which reason educes from the facts of revelation; and in building it up, it is essential that the process of right reasoning be followed. As in every

other science, so in Christian theology, we find that the whole is professedly built upon a basis of facts, and consists of a system of conclusions drawn from them.

The existence of Christianity itself is a great fact: its history a course of events linked together by cause and effect, like any other history. The life, death, and teaching of Jesus Christ are historical facts; the history and institutions of Judaism, which form so large a part of the groundwork of Christian faith, all are historical facts; just as real and certain, to be proved by similar evidence, and forming the basis of similar conclusions, as the life of Julius Cæsar, or the history of Rome. There is indeed no more noticeable characteristic of Christianity, as compared with any other religion or faith, than that its basis is professedly a collection of facts. Christianity is no theory of life, like Plato's Republic, no system of the schools, no pious dream, like Buddhism; but a Science of living, based upon a history and a life, and a literature grouped around them.

It is much to be deplored that this has been overlooked. The constant appeal to *testimony* by the sacred authors has been unheeded, and the study of Christian evidence laid aside; and the teachers of Christianity of late years have

been content to rest its claims to belief on the mere basis of a vague religious sentiment, which may be as well claimed in support of one religion as another, and has ere now been proved the ground of the wildest delusions.

It must be plainly insisted upon that the Christian faith claims to rest upon a basis of history and fact, and challenges investigation on that ground; and that Christian theology is a science of life reared upon that basis, claiming the same regard to its conclusions as other sciences—the chief and sum of them, as it deals with the highest interests and noblest faculties of humanity.

But there are two objections which present themselves here: that the Christian evidences professedly involve matters not cognisable by human senses, and depend upon a class of facts, miracles, prophecies, and the like, which are contrary to common experience, and which therefore an enlightened scientific spirit rejects.

These objections, though very similar, are really distinct, and must be dealt with separately. As the commonest, we may take that relating to miracles first.

I. "Miracles are so contrary to common experience that science may reject them without

further inquiry." Is she true to her own principles in doing so?

We may take it as an admitted axiom that any true science rests upon the basis of all known facts, and that her conclusions are drawn by generalisation from all the particulars that bear on any given point. Now it is perfectly clear that no observer, indeed no group of observers in any time or place, can claim to observe or ascertain all the facts or phenomena which bear on any one subject for himself or themselves, but is bound to take the evidence of other competent observers. To refuse to accord belief to such evidence when it tells of matters that have not come within our own experience argues no scientific spirit, but the mere incredulity of ignorance.

The New Zealand chieftain who maintained that water was always a fluid, and could not under any circumstances take a solid form, was, within the limits of his own observation, strictly a man of science. He educed a general law from all the facts which he and his tribe could ever observe in a country where water never freezes. But when he was told by Europeans that water *did* take the solid form of ice under certain circumstances, it was no true scientific spirit, but the incredulity of ignorance,

that made him reject the evidence as a pack of palpable lies.

So, to take a well-known instance in our own scientific world. The voyage of Darwin in the *Beagle* was an epoch in the history of natural science, because it supplied a world of facts, unknown to scientific observers before, which in many instances compelled them to modify or give up conclusions which seemed fully established. Would it have been true to any principles of science if savants at home had rejected the discoveries of Darwin because the facts he reported had never come within their experience,—were indeed many of them opposed to what had been considered established laws?

Or take a more recent instance. Some years ago it was almost an admitted law among naturalists that no organic life could exist below a certain depth in the sea, because, according to all observation, the pressure of the water at greater depths must be destructive to living organisms. But when the *Challenger* went out to take deep-sea soundings at depths never before reached, it was found that dredgings were brought up containing organisms from the bottom of the sea at depths which had been thought incredible.

There you have a direct instance of a seemingly established law which had to be completely

modified by a single fact brought to light. And it is as utterly unscientific for men to reject *à priori* such evidence as that of miracles, on the ground that they are contrary to common experience, as it would be for a naturalist to refuse belief in Globigerina mud, on the ground that all previous experience established a law that living organisms could not exist at such depths under sea pressure.

Miracles are alleged historical facts—they rest upon such evidence as establishes any other historical facts; and if so established, must be admitted as sufficient evidence for all that they legitimately prove. To reject them *à priori*, as being contrary to ordinary experience, is utterly unscientific. Any true scientific thinker, if satisfied of the *competence* and *credibility* of other observers who bring fresh facts to his knowledge, is bound to accept their testimony, and marshal their added facts with those already ascertained—even though they may be wholly unknown to himself, or those on whom he has been accustomed to rely—even though any one of these facts, or any group of them, may upset a whole accepted doctrine, or compel the remodelling of a science.

Therefore if the Christian miracles be true in fact—if, that is, the *competence* and *credibility*

of the witnesses who relate them be ascertained, and their testimony clear so far as is possible under the circumstances—such, in short, as would suffice to establish any ordinary historical fact—then science is untrue to herself in rejecting them, or any conclusions legitimately derived from them, on mere *à priori* grounds of improbability, or contrariety to common experience.

II. So too with regard to the kindred objection that the Christian evidences deal with matters not cognisable by human faculties: phenomena of an alleged spiritual world of which we know nothing, because we can have no means of observing its facts or laws, which therefore the scientific mind can take no account of.

That objection is precisely the same as if a physician refused to take into consideration any mental phenomena on the ground that his science dealt with the body, and could take no cognisance of things of the mental world. Every doctor knows that there are facts and laws of a mental world which, little as they may be understood, and inexplicable by any material science, are so real that he cannot disregard them. He must accept all that he can learn about them, and take them into account as far as he is able. All reason and experience—indeed the universal observation of mankind—teach us that there is a

whole series of phenomena observable in human life which are inexplicable by anything yet ascertained in natural science—moving, indeed, in a plane so different from things cognisable by natural sense, that our faculties hardly can grasp them. Now it is of the sphere in which these forces move, the world in which these phenomena originate, that Revelation professes to tell us. If it dealt only with matters which ordinary experience could observe, and laws that human faculties could educe, it would be wholly unnecessary; indeed, as a *revelation* it would be a contradiction in terms. Its whole contention and claim is that it *reveals* to us facts and laws of another world, by which we are affected in the highest of all human concerns, but of which we have not sufficient experience to ascertain the facts, nor faculties to educe the laws.

It is of the spiritual world, which all human experience recognises as lying about us, but no human senses or faculties can adequately grasp, that Revelation professes to tell us; and that in a properly scientific way, by the observation of competent witnesses, adding fresh facts to those which we can glean from our own human experience—facts sufficient to establish a law about such phenomena which we could not arrive at by the unaided process of the human mind,

from the paucity of the data which come within our observation in ordinary life.

Therefore it is wholly *unscientific* to sweep away the whole fabric of Christianity, as the current infidelity of the day is wont to do, and to say that because its conclusions contradict some theories of modern science, they must be either false or unknowable. Christianity, as a revelation, professes to give the testimony of witnesses who have had the power of observing things not within ordinary ken. If the competence and credibility of the witnesses be proved —which must be tested by the same methods as we apply to the evidence for any historical facts —then you are bound, by the principles and in the interests of all true science, to admit the facts, and the conclusions which right reason draws legitimately from them. That brings us to the Christian evidences again.

We cannot have a better instance of this, which really is the key of the whole position of Christianity in its battle with infidelity, and therefore is of the utmost importance for us to grasp thoroughly, than that which is the very central point of the Christian Revelation—the resurrection.

That Christ died—here is an asserted fact, which must be dealt with as any other historical

fact. If the evidence is as clear as that which we accept for the death of any other historical person, say Julius Cæsar, we must accept it. So, too, *that Christ in three days rose again:* if the evidence of the witnesses who knew Him in life and saw Him afterwards is so clear and consistent that we should admit it as conclusive in other matters, we must accept it as conclusive on this point. If we accept these two facts as established, we *have* in Christ the case of a *witness* who *has* passed into and from the spiritual world of which He professes to reveal the phenomena. And if, from other considerations such as we should apply in a parallel case, we are satisfied of His *competence* and *credibility,* then we are bound to accept His witness, and add the facts He has revealed to the store with which our reason has to deal as the basis of knowledge.

This is an instance to show that we cannot too strongly insist on pinning down science to be true to her own principles.

The common *à priori* infidelity of the day, which rejects the Christian Revelation from a supposed contradiction of modern science to its teaching, is utterly unscientific; but it is quite beside the mark to endeavour to meet it simply by an appeal to a mere general sentiment of religion. To give a "reason of the hope that is

in us," by which the attacks on Christianity may be repelled, is a matter of evidence. Mark, we cannot say that there is not a higher evidence for each man than any of which we have spoken, the evidence of which he for himself may be sensible by the communication of a divine light and spiritual influence upon his soul. But this is the consummation rather than the origin of his faith thus to have "the witness in himself," and needs long years of spiritual experience. For those who have not faith as yet assured, or who are inclined to reject Christianity on *à priori* grounds, it is essential to refer to the evidences upon which it is established. Surely it was for this that the apostles who were chosen witnesses of the life and teaching, the death and resurrection of Christ, constantly appeal to the *witness* or *testimony* which there was to the truth of the facts which they alleged? And if we accept, as we are bound to accept, the main leading facts of Revelation, on evidence which in any other matter of history would be considered absolutely irrefragable, then we are logically bound to accept the testimony of Christ and His witnesses as to the truths established upon those facts; and thus, "he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true."

We have come then to this, that theology is a science akin to all other sciences, in that it consists of a system of conclusions drawn by reason from ascertained facts, some of which are within ordinary observation, some rest upon the testimony of competent witnesses. The only speciality of theology is that in its case the latter class of facts belong to a sphere which ordinary observation and experience cannot reach—truths of Revelation which are made known to us by witnesses whose competence and credibility must be tested by ordinary methods and approved laws, but when approved must be accepted as conclusive, in the same way as the evidence of experts in any other branch of science.

To say that theology rests *ultimately* thus on the facts of Revelation is very far from saying that it does so wholly. On the contrary, there are few other sciences which may not supply data of the utmost value in determining the conclusions of theology, as the wider the ground on which they rest the more sure and stable are the conclusions of any science.

We have spoken of the antagonism that seems to actuate modern physical science in its attitude towards theology ; we must not forget that there is often a hostility shown by theologians towards

science quite as unfounded and unreasonable. If we are careful to determine their relevancy to the subject there are hardly any other branches of scientific investigation which may not be found to supply additional matter on which to ground the conclusions of theology. Take as an instance the researches of Mr. Darwin. Probably nothing in modern times has been received with such a storm of disapproval by the religious world as the publication of his physiological theories. How far they are warranted by the facts is a matter with which we have no concern. But if they are true, it is remarkable what added light and corroboration they supply to some of the most orthodox dogmas of theology.

That the whole existing human race is sprung from one parent stem is a fact of revelation which for centuries provoked a smile of incredulity from the outer world. Darwin has proved that by the researches of modern science it is as certain as any such position can be. Or take a more strictly argumentative dogma: what a singular light and strong corroboration is thrown upon the orthodox doctrine of original sin by the established law of the same school of physiologists as to the persistency and influence of hereditary predispositions and transmitted instincts? or upon the vexed and difficult doctrine

of election, by the established law of natural selection as the governing principle in the physical world? Indeed a volume might be filled with similar instances to show the corroborative light which the progress of modern natural science may be made to shed upon all true theology; but it is beside our purpose. All that is necessary is to show the relation that really exists between the two; and how, if that relation be rightly grasped, and the true province of each defined, there can be no antagonism felt on either side

What discovery in science ever called forth such a protest from theology as that of Galileo? What has ever thrown such added light upon the cosmogony of the Bible, or supplied such a necessary corrective to some extravagant conclusions of other sciences when they seemed to contradict the teaching of Revelation, as that same science of astronomy which the discoveries of Galileo first set on the right track of investigation?

We may rest assured that if only theology be sound—that is, if the revealed facts be true, and our conclusions drawn from them be those of right reason—there can be no real antagonism between the two. Dark questions there may be involved in both, and difficulties felt in finding

the clue to reconcile them in our imperfect state of human knowledge; but there can be no real antagonism between the several interests of these twin sisters of the family of God if they both walk in the light of Him who is the living truth.

Neither has science aught to apprehend from theology, save added light on matters which, though intensely real, are beyond her faculties to ascertain: nor have we, whose hopes are based upon a revelation, anything to fear, save from the oppositions of a science which is *falsely* so-called.

CHAPTER IV.

TRUE AND FALSE THEOLOGY.

CHRISTIAN theology therefore is itself a science, and must be judged according to its own subject-matter, and the evidences adduced on its own ground. The only peculiarity in it is that many of the facts on which it rests do not, from the very necessity of the case, come within the scope of ordinary observation, but are established for us by accredited witnesses. So far as it is a system drawn out by human reason from those facts, there is unquestionably an element of possible fallibility in its conclusions. And indeed nothing is more noticeable than that the current objections which are brought against the truth of Christianity are in the great majority of instances levelled against mere popular misunderstandings and perversions of revealed truth, which are, in short, nothing but unscientific conclusions from the facts of Revelation. But it is clear that many such may be, and undoubtedly

are, current, without in any way impugning the truth of Revelation itself, any more than the misunderstandings as to geologic laws which were prevalent fifty years ago might be taken to prove that there was no truth in geology. We may admit freely that there is a great deal of very loose theology current, a mass of uninformed popular beliefs, which have little or no foundation in revealed truth; and it will be found that in almost all instances the current objections to Christianity are in reality levelled against these, and not against any direct statements of Revelation. All that their existence proves is the necessity of care in drawing the conclusions of theology from the facts of Revelation according to the methods of right reason, the approved laws of thought, by which alone certainty can be arrived at in any process of ratiocination. That theology should rest to a great extent upon a different class of facts from those which form the basis of other sciences, argues no more improbability in it, and no more contradiction to them, than we may infer from astronomy, which deals with pure mathematics resting on a totally different basis of facts from anthropology. Physical sciences professedly deal only with things that come within the observation of man's ordinary senses. Theology

professedly deals largely with matters that lie entirely beyond their scope. If there be any seeming contradiction, there need be no necessary improbability in either, when their subject-matters are so essentially different, and science is so professedly progressive. Other sciences may seem to contradict each other, as, for instance, the geologist of to-day may demand a length of time for the production of geologic phenomena, millions of years, which the astronomer may refuse to grant as having been passed under similar conditions. No rational man would on that account reject either science, but wait until a more perfect acquaintance with the facts of both should enable him to harmonise their conclusions. That there should be apparent discrepancies argues no improbability in either, nor any necessary contradiction, unless we are prepared to say that we have exhausted the whole range of possible knowledge, and found the facts of both the physical and spiritual worlds irreconcilable with the Revelation on which Christianity is based. Such minor discrepancies or difficulties as may exist any reasonable man will treat as of very little moment in comparison with the main facts and purport of revealed teaching, if they are corroborated by the observation of mankind, so far as

the experience of mankind can be called in comparison with them. And contradictions which simply arise from popular misunderstandings or perversions of revealed truth may be brushed aside at once. They are the preconceived notions which men have read into the simple statements of Revelation, or the unscientific conclusions of a false theology, which do not in the least affect the truth of Christianity.

But now we find ourselves confronted by a question which is of the gravest importance. If there is no essential antagonism between science and theology, if they are akin in their conditions, and only move in different spheres which should make them supplementary to each other, and if there is nothing in the ascertained facts of modern science that militates against the truth of the Revelation we accept, is the antagonism now observed due to any altered methods of modern science?

Now modern science professes to be based upon strict induction from all known facts that bear on any subject of investigation, giving to each their proper value, and leading up through the conclusions to be drawn from the whole field of ascertained particulars to a general law; which, when so based on all known facts and drawn out by right reason, is, so far as we are

concerned, fully established. The older modes of thought were not thus inductive. They rested on theories propounded by some master-mind, and depended on the truth of the logical process of its reasoning, and not on the accumulation or grouping of facts that bear upon any given point. All the old schools of philosophy were thus formed on the theories of some great thinker, whose *dicta* were conclusive to his disciples, and the facts of the universe had to fit themselves in with the theory or be left out in the cold.

Modern science discards all such processes. The master-mind is shown in the patient accumulation of facts, the skilful grouping of them in due relation to any given question, and the strict induction by which a law is drawn out which harmonises them all. Unquestionably this must be admitted to be the only true method of reasoning, and all that distinguishes the truth of modern science, as opposed to the theories of older schools of thought, is due to it. Happy intuitions there may have been in the old philosophies, and their logical methods were often marvels of intellectual acumen. But the real test of truth is unquestionably the strict induction from all ascertainable facts, which is the distinguishing

principle of modern science. It must be admitted that theology, one of the oldest of sciences, as the subject with which it deals is that which first engages the serious thought of every rational being, has partaken to a great extent of the spirit of the old philosophies, and has been shaped by modes of thought which prevailed before modern processes of reasoning were brought to their present perfection. The effect on popular theology is palpable. The thinkers who in the later middle ages were conspicuous for their attempts to reduce the belief of Christianity to logical systems have made their influence felt on all Christendom subsequently; and their method was notoriously that which modern science has rejected. A theory was evolved by some great thinker or school of theologians, and from this all relations of the various truths of Revelation, or facts of human consciousness, had to be deduced; and if they were not found to fit in with the theory, so much the worse for the facts. If opposition was offered, or objections raised, the "*Ipse dixit*"—"the master himself said it"—was an ample answer to opposition or objections in the mind of the disciples brought up in such a school of thought. That there was absolute unity of belief in the middle ages

is notoriously untrue. There were various beliefs which men drew from the admitted truths of Revelation; but it was not until the junction of the middle and later ages of Christianity that they were drawn up into the logical systems which in their divergence have caused the divisions of Christendom. But in all this there is nothing in the history of theology that is unlike any other science. We may remember the fierce battle that raged not so many years ago between the rival systems of geology—the Plutonian and the Neptunian—the one ascribing all geologic phenomena to the agency of fire, the other to that of water. And we know how the rivalry was at last composed by the patient labours of those who led out the plain facts which the progress of true geologic research disclosed to conclusions which set Plutonian and Neptunian theorists alike aside.

But the simple fact of the widely divergent schools of Christian theology proves that the conclusions of all of them cannot be equally right, and that when the facts of Revelation are established there is an element of possible error in the process of reasoning by which conclusions are drawn from them; and therefore it is of the utmost importance that in such a

process the methods of right reason be strictly and carefully adhered to, and the same laws of interpretation and induction observed, as have been found the only safe rules of thought in any other process of scientific reasoning. The only hope for Christianity to be one again, that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son, lies in the way in which the conclusions of right reason may be drawn out from the facts, recorded and revealed, which all Christians admit, in such clearness and accuracy that no rational mind can gainsay or resist them. There are just the same possible elements of error in theology (after we admit the Revelation) as there are in any other science: the admission of unauthenticated data—wrong apprehension of premises —ambiguity of terms—false processes of induction — and faulty generalisation. When these are all corrected there ought to be no more difference of opinion in theology than men of science admit as to the conclusions of geology or ethnology.

But if we make one notable exception, we find that most of the divisions of Christendom spring from the very faults of the older methods which modern science has rejected. The errors of Romanism are to be clearly traced to the sur-

vival or reintroduction of pagan beliefs and habits of religious thought among the *data* that form the groundwork of Christianity, and the admission of tradition and custom as of equal authority with the authenticated truths of Revelation. These are the unauthenticated premises of Roman theology, that have been stereotyped by the assumption that there is an infallible personal arbiter of truth in the Pope, which is a thing opposed to all the teaching of right reason, and contradicted by the whole experience of the world. On the other hand, if we look to the many systems of sectarian theology which reject these elements of error, we find that their divergences are due to the very fault of the older system of ratiocination, by rejecting which modern science has placed herself on the track of truth. They have in each case sprung from the logical system of some one thinker, and rest upon the completeness of the theory which he evolved, rather than on honest induction from the whole field of revealed and recorded truths. Calvinism is a logical scheme resting on the authority of John Calvin; Lutheranism, on that of Martin Luther — both of them very compact logical schemes as far as they go, having a foundation upon revealed truth. But they are tainted with the radical vice that they are based only on

such parts of the whole of Revelation as Calvin or Luther could grasp as the basis of their scheme. And we find on inquiry into them that to make the scheme logically complete whole series of truths and groups of material facts had to be left out of sight, explained away from their fair meaning and legitimate inferences, or even wilfully suppressed. Therefore the divisions of Christendom are branded as unscientific. They stand in the same relation to true theology as the Neptunian or Plutonian theories of former years to geology. And the hope of Christendom for the future lies in the application of the same principles that have led to the establishment on a sound footing of all modern sciences. To sift, test, and ascertain the real value and meaning of revealed truth by contemporaneous witness; to range and marshal all ascertained or revealed facts in their proper relation, without undue prominence to some, or suppression of any that are material to the issue; to draw conclusions by strict induction from all authenticated data, and appeal to the general assent of all who are qualified to judge, as the test of truth—these are the only methods by which we can arrive at theological certainty.

And we may point out that these are the distinguishing principles of properly Catholic

interpretation, which our Church has adhered to, as opposed to Romanist or sectarian theology. The Sixth Article of the Church of England states very accurately the principle on which we take our stand, in the interpretation of Revelation, when it confines our necessary theological assent to "whatsoever is to be read therein or may be proved thereby"—in other words, to the simple statements of revealed and recorded truth, which are the *data* of theology, and the legitimate conclusions to be drawn from them by right reason. And in a later Article (XVII.) we have an express direction that we are to take the whole field of revealed truths as our basis, and not any partial range which might make our system more logically compact, "in such wise as they be *generally* set forth to us in Holy Scripture," which is indeed the very scientific safeguard of truth against error. Thus we are led to "prophesy according to the proportion of the faith"—that is, to take the whole range of truths, ascertained and revealed in their due relation, and follow the lead of right reason in interpreting their relevancy and meaning, and drawing our conclusions by strict induction from the whole.

Now it is unquestionable that much of the current infidelity of the day is stirred into

antagonism to Christianity because of the many phases of popular religion, or the floating tenets of popular theology, which are palpably irrational. Often indeed unbelief is supposed to be attacking Christianity when in reality it is occupied with mere travesties of faith, which the true interpretation of Revelation clearly condemns. It is of the utmost importance therefore, both to our own adequate understanding of what is revealed and to our hope of vanquishing the objections which infidelity may raise, that we should be clear not only as to the sufficiency of the evidence on which our faith is based, but also as to the soundness of the conclusions which we draw from truths revealed—in other words, to the scientific accuracy of our theology.

Any one reading the celebrated work of Bishop Colenso, with an adequate understanding of what the early history of the Bible really states or professes to be, must see at once that the host of trivial objections raised by him against the truth of the Bible are levelled in reality against popular perversions of the Bible's meaning. And the mass of haphazard doubts and objections current in the world since Colenso's days, which form the stock arguments of secularist papers and addresses, and lie at the root of most of the *à priori* infidelity of students of

modern science, are found really to affect only popular misunderstandings of Christianity, and not in any appreciable way the truth of Revelation itself. Men of culture are familiar with popular traditions of Calvinism, or crude and bald misrepresentations of Lutheranism, or are shocked by the excesses of ignorant fanatical zeal; or their own memories are stored with nursery legends, poured into their infant ears as Scripture tales, in which old classic and Teutonic myths have been interwoven strangely with facts of revealed truth. And they never take the trouble to dissect out the admixture of error from the elements of truth, but when any conclusions of physical science seem to conflict with the traditions of religion which have been thus familiar to their minds, or when their better reason and consciousness jar against the grim semi-pagan doctrines in which they have been brought up, they at once reject the truth of Revelation, without taking the pains to ascertain whether that which they feel unable to accept is in reality a part of revealed truth or only a caricature and perversion of it. As reasonably might a theologian reject physiology as *à priori* an imposture, on the ground that it is palpably preposterous to say that a man was once a monkey, and formerly a sponge.

Physiological science never said such a thing; but to represent the doctrine of evolution as claiming to prove it is no greater perversion of its meaning and claims than ninety-nine out of every hundred of the popular objections to Christianity are misrepresentations of revealed truth. Theology, as a science, has a right to be judged like any other science, according to the legitimate weight of its own evidence, and the strict letter of its legitimate conclusions. The duty of theologians is to see that its evidences are put fairly and fully before the world, and its conclusions honestly and carefully drawn out, without admixture of unauthenticated tradition or illogical perversions of its true teaching. When physical and historical sciences are fairly defined and perfected in their own sphere, and theology in hers, then they may be arrayed against each other, and the battle—if any conflict there may then be between them—fairly fought.

Hitherto all collision has been due either to scientific objections pressed beyond their proper sphere, or to manifest perversions of theology which have invited attack by their own palpable inaccuracy. When both are drawn up in their own perfect accuracy and truth, the conflict may be fairly waged, unless it be found in the light

of that day, as we firmly hold, that no conflict then will be possible; but that any antagonistic attitude that may have hitherto been taken up is but the skirmishing of troops marching from different camps in the same great army of truth, and mistaking friends for foes in the darkness. And that darkness has been nothing else but the smoke and cloud and dust of ignorant struggles between science untrue to herself, and theology that has been sadly too often and too much unscientific.

Now have we not the task before us in these times, as heirs of all the ages of development that human reason and knowledge have gone through—the same task in matters revealed which our generation of science has had in matters observed—to make use of the world of fresh facts bearing upon human life which the progress of modern investigation has ascertained, and the improved methods of reasoning which better acquaintance with the laws of thought has perfected, to go carefully over the field of theological science and try its conclusions? The true hope of religion for the hold it may have upon intelligent minds lies in the execution of this task by those who will not fear to accept the inherent conditions of reason and revelation. They will have to recognise that the true use of

reason in theology is the same as in all matters that come within the province of any science—the same laws, processes, and conditions to be followed and observed. But they will have to do this in the true scientific spirit, receiving the definite truths of Revelation as the facts or data on which their conclusions must be based, whether the phenomena be spiritual or historical, and accepting the testimony of witnesses whose competence and credibility are proved in matters which from the nature of the case cannot fall within the scope of ordinary observation.

The process must be gone through, for until it is done there can be little hope of reconciling theology with modern science, or composing the differences which now make Christendom divided, and therefore weak. It was a true answer, in a wider sense than perhaps he meant it, which the Patriarch of Constantinople returned to the Bishop of Rome, when invited to the Vatican Council, that "the only way of uniting Christendom again was the historical one." The true hope for Christianity lies in the way in which this task may be performed, of trying all the recorded facts and revealed data on which it rests, marshalling them in their true light and proportions, and carefully

building up our system of belief by the conclusions which right reason draws legitimately from them. It is a process covering a wide range of thought, and requiring infinite care and pains, trained abilities, and very patient and minute investigations.

But if revealed religion is true, we can have no fears for the result. For this cause came He into the world who is the true Life and Light of men, that He should bear witness unto the truth; and we may rest confident that no research which brings us nearer unto truth can ever lead away from Him. Indeed no fear need be felt for any essential article of our creed, even of those generally considered most dogmatic, if that faith be true, when tried by such a test, except it be by methods which are themselves unscientific. Truth stands immovable, like a vast pyramid, a weighty structure based on the whole wide field of facts that form its groundwork, built up with care and pains in layer on layer of solid reasoning that narrows up to the point where its conclusion may be grasped by the finite intellect, unalterable in its massive solidity by the lapse of time or any shocks of rude assault.

It is but error that is like the pyramid upside down—a spreading superstructure reared on the

narrow point of a single accepted theory, or the insufficient base of an isolated group of facts, that cover but some few points of the ground on which the structure professes to be built—the very emblem of instability, which the first rude breath of hostile criticism must upset, even as the pyramid of truth on its proper basis is the very emblem of stability, as solid as the everlasting hills.

CHAPTER V.

NATURAL RELIGION.

The Christian world has lately found itself confronted with a question, somewhat singularly presenting itself at this age of Christianity, in the direction of which a strong current of opinion has been lately setting, and to which some well-known publications have given prominence. That is, whether any revelation has been at all needed; whether Christianity, or so much of it as deals with matters beyond the ordinary experience of mankind, and not cognisable by human sense, may not be calmly set aside as irrevelant; whether, in short, a natural religion does not supply all that is really necessary for man's guidance and the satisfying of his higher nature, so that, content with such light and spiritual life as may be gathered from things of experience and sense, we may dismiss all claims of any supernatural revelation as unnecessary, and whether there be any element of truth in it or not, need not be inquired into.

This question must be met. The minds of many who hold that Christianity as a revelation is of divine authority, have been deeply stirred as they have read the conclusions to which (we are now taught) minds that are led by the higher culture of the day are tending. Are we really to believe that Christianity, as it has always been understood, is played out? that "the good Lord Jesus has had His day," and henceforth all that need satisfy the enlightened spirit of the age is a passionate devotion to art or science, and the enthusiasm of humanity? Are minds unconvinced or untouched by the sense of Christian truth, to rest content with setting it calmly aside as unworthy of investigation? a competitor among many rivals on an equal footing for the assent of mankind, claiming to rest upon grounds which need not be inquired into, for that those other religions have shown that there is ample basis for any necessary faith without them?

At least we need not surrender the field without some consideration of our position. Christianity is *there* before us—a solid fact which cannot be ignored. History is as true a science as physiology or chemistry, and its facts must be treated with the same consideration. It is a historical fact that thousands of contemporary

rational beings accepted the resurrection of Christ as true at a time when, if it were a fiction, it could have been disproved with ease and certainty, and when all living authorities had the strongest possible reasons for disproving the alleged fact, if only they could have done so. It is a fact that these thousands were so convinced of the truth of that fact that they lived in assurance of belief, to their own great loss and restraint, and died in it; indeed, many dying *for* it, taking cheerfully all loss, even of life itself, rather than surrender their faith in that resurrection and all that it pledged to them.

It is a fact that millions since have lived and died in that faith, in spite of the most bitter attacks upon it—attacks so persistent and unrelenting, that if it were not true, then they who held it were of all men the most miserable. It is a fact that that belief has been the one regenerating influence upon mankind, with which nothing in all history can be compared. And now to be told that we must hand over Christianity as a worn out superstition, only because the higher culture of the day will not take the pains to inquire into the basis on which it rests, is rather preposterous! At least we feel inclined to say

to this higher culture—"Prove your own ground, my young friend; prove that the culture of to-morrow will not demolish you, as you have done with your brother of yesterday. Stand the attacks of enemies and be a source of spiritual life and comfort to your friends for eighteen centuries, even as Christianity has done, and then we will compare notes, and see which is the real power, and which stands upon the more solid basis of the two."

But it is worth discussing whether there is anything in this εἴδωλον of a natural religion of which Christianity need be afraid. If the higher culture proves its ground, will it be found a real young giant that can drive all creeds and churches out of its way? or if we dissect it, may we not find that it is but a pasteboard mask after all, behind which a little shivering ὑποκριτής masquerades, that has played many characters, and has been hissed off the stage in all?

Indeed the advocates of natural religion assume too much. They take it for granted that the grounds of their opponents' arguments have already been disposed of, and they offer absolutely nothing solid in the shape of counter proof. They call mankind from the green pastures and living streams where they have

fed in peace, and say: "Come, my children, here ye have no abiding place, all this is unsatisfying and vain; a doom is over it which will make this fair and pleasant view vanish from before your eyes, and the food you eat turn to ashes between your teeth. Come and see the fairer vision of better pastures and clearer streams that we have to offer you." But lo! when we walk up to them, they are but a mirage; and we find ourselves standing on the arid sands of a desert, with the sky as brass above our heads; and hungry and thirsty our soul faints within us. And most offensive of all is the way in which writers of this school will take the phrases of Christian teaching, assume that all vital meaning has been extracted from them, play with them as with counters, and then assure us they are empty shells, and there never was a kernel in them at all!

Let us then turn to this special point: What is the antagonism between natural religion and revelation, and how far can the former assume to supersede or set aside the latter? And at the outset we must inquire, What is natural religion? No definition has been offered by its votaries, and perhaps we shall find that if it is clearly drawn any

possible ground of conflict between it and Christianity will be so materially narrowed that sensible men will pay little regard to it.

And first, what do we mean by Religion? It is worth while to ask this, because this is one of those terms which are on everybody's lips, and as no one ever thinks what it really means, its sense has become most vague and indeterminate. In such a case the only hope of arriving at a definite understanding is to trace the history of its gradual use from the first usage in which we find it current.

For it is such current use that stamps the real meaning of every word, showing what floating ideas in men's minds first became fixed into the phrase that was coined to represent them, and what process of thought subsequently rounded them off into the shape in which they have now become familiar to us.

"Religion," then, was originally a Latin phrase, by which we now currently translate into our language a Greek word in familiar use, both in classic Greek and the dialect in which the writings of the Christian Revelation have come down to us. And when we use it thus, we tacitly assume that the word "religion" to us now expresses the idea that the men of old who spoke of their *relligio* or *θρησκεία* had in their minds

eighteen or twenty centuries ago. But it is not so at all. *Relligio* to an old Roman expressed a very clear and definite idea, which is stamped upon the word that was coined to pass current for it; and the same may be said of *θρησκεία* in the mouth of an old Greek. But neither of them expressed exactly what we mean when we speak of Christianity as a religion, or give any adequate idea of what the Christian Revelation claims to be.

What then was *relligio?*—"Id quod relligat"—that which binds men's minds with a sense of scruple or conscientious obligation. That there is such a sense of scruple and obligation is a universal instinct of humanity, and does not imply or depend upon any revelation necessarily, or any asserted supernatural influence. These have been very commonly claimed to enforce or correct the dictates of religion, notably, but not only, in the case of Judaism and Christianity. But the essential idea of *relligio* is not in itself dependent upon a revelation or on any supernatural authority. It is an instinct of humanity; and we may say an universal instinct. We find it so widely spread among all races of mankind, from the highest to the lowest, that it would seem as if there never was known a family of men who had not some sense of scruple and obliga-

tion, something that is binding in men's conscientious sense—*id quod relligat.*

And perhaps in no race was this sense ever so strong or so pervading as in the old Romans, not excepting even the old Jews. By these latter their *relligio* was held to have a higher sanction, and was enforced by rewards and punishments of a higher nature, even as it was fenced round with ordinances of peculiar sanctity. But the sense itself never seems to have been any stronger or deeper even with the old Jews than it was with the Romans of old time. It was one of their marked characteristics—we had almost called it a passion of their race—the sense of obligation and scruple of conscience, very singularly marked in a rude and simple age, that was the very mainspring of their greatness and national unity. The one marked element of higher life in the early Roman race, which by its own force lifted them up from mere barbarism and savagery to no mean civilisation, which when they lost they forfeited all national strength and moral force, and went down to an inevitable decay, was that which they coined the word to represent that passes current to this very day—*relligio.*

How it thence passed into our language, as the precepts of Christianity became the *relligio* which

the later Romans embraced, and handed on by the Latinised races that succeeded them to our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, need not be now enlarged upon. But it has been thus naturalised to translate a word in another tongue, which the apostles of our faith familiarly used—that is, *θρησκεία*. Are then the ideas expressed by them the same? Quite the reverse. *θρησκεία* conveys no sense of scruple or obligation of conscience. Its root is the word *τρέω*, and expresses the *thrill* of veneration and awe with which man feels himself in the presence of any higher power. *Relligio* and *θρησκεία* have indeed nothing in common, save that they are both common instincts of humanity. That the word *thrill* should have passed from the old Hellenic root *τρε*—even down to our own day, in colloquial usage, expressing *per onomatopœiam* that instinctive feeling—proves indeed what a common instinct it is. And who has not felt that thrill of awe that runs through our blood as we find ourselves in some sublime presence? in long vistas of forest glades, with tall pines waving solemn melodies overhead, which the Greeks of old fancied must be peopled with fauns and dryads, so supernatural seemed the sense inwrought by all their accessories; or on the

sublime solitariness of mountain peaks, which struck such a feeling of awe, that the gods must sure have their seat upon them! Do we not trace this feeling in almost all religions; from the superstitions which of old drove men to hold their rites of worship in "groves and hill altars," with the instinct of veneration which there was added to their adoration of the Unseen, down to the artificial reproduction of all such associations, adorned with all that is most beautiful in art and architecture, which we find consecrated in the temples and cathedrals of the higher religious organisations? When the "arched walks of twilight groves, and shadows brown that Sylvan loves;" or the "close covert by the brook, where no profaner eye may look;" have given place to the "studious cloisters pale, —the high embowed roof with antique pillars massy proof; and storied windows richly dight, casting a dim religious light." There is *θρησκεία*, another common instinct of humanity; the sense of awe and reverence as of an unseen power, which is produced by many recognised associations, and in its highest phase leads men to the presence, felt, though unseen, even of the Most High. But it is clear that, though alike in this, that both are common instincts of humanity, and in that they both depend upon the sense

of some higher power outside of man, to whom he acknowledges some obligation due, some reverence to be paid, *relligio* and *θρησκεία* are things very different in themselves. They do indeed differ as widely as the practical, solid, law-abiding, and matter of fact Roman differed in all his national characteristics from the mercurial, impressionable, imaginative Greek. Nothing stamps more distinctly their separate characteristics than these very words, in which have become crystallised the leading ideas of religion of both races. But in different proportions, and with widely varying manifestations, *relligio* and *θρησκεία* are both found present to make up the religions of most peoples and in all times.

We even see the two principles in very varied phases in different sections of national life at one time, as in the times of religious wars, like the Rebellion in England. The Puritans were ruled by a *relligio*, and the Cavaliers by *θρησκεία*, and the ideas were so incompatible that each seemed to the other an utterly *irreligious* race, which it was a duty to exterminate. Indeed, we might well carry the parallel down to the legitimate descendants of each party who survive to our own days, and trace the bitter acrimony of our own religious feuds to this very

radical discrepancy of the ideas which are wrongly covered by our one word, religion. Unless we choose to give that word a comprehensive sense, and define it as the common instinct of humanity which leads man to acknowledge a power without him, to whom an obligation of conscience is due, and towards whom a sentiment of reverence is called forth, thus embracing both sides of the character which we call religious. We may do this, and take the word religion to cover both *relligio* and *θρησκεία*, or we may take it as the equivalent of either, provided that we bear in mind that the ideas are quite distinct and very characteristically marked, only alike in being common instincts of humanity, which are capable of being combined in an infinite variety of degrees, and manifested in an infinite variety of forms and phases.

If then we define religion thus, the turning-point of the question as to natural religion is seen to be this: May religion be sufficiently based upon that order of the universe which we call natural, without any revelation, or any such basis as we call supernatural?

But when it is so stated, it is seen that the question divides itself into two entirely distinct branches of inquiry; and it is precisely the

failure to see this that has caused the most unsatisfactory vagueness of which we have to complain in the advocates of natural religion. For it is not only, May the instinct of religion (whether as a *relligio* or as a *θρησκεία*) be called forth by what men may observe in the order of the visible universe? but also, Does such religion at all supersede the necessity of a revelation, or conflict necessarily with a faith which professedly is based upon supernatural evidence?

These, it will be seen, are totally distinct questions. The first of them we may unhesitatingly answer in the affirmative. It may be at once conceded that there is quite sufficient ground for believing that the observed order of the universe may call forth the sentiment of religion in man. Indeed, if we are right in defining that as a common instinct of humanity, a very slight influence from without may suffice to evoke it. Probably the acquaintance of a negro or Red Indian with what the higher culture of the day knows as the observed order of the universe is exceedingly slight, but it evokes the religious sense in him nevertheless. We may go further, and say that the intelligent contemplation of nature may to a great extent inform the religious sense as well as evoke it. Whether as a sense of

moral obligation or as a sentiment of awe, many high, ennobling, and purifying thoughts may be imbibed from a rational and devout study of the order of the universe.

This at least no disciple of Christianity could question, when he considers what a large proportion of the religious thought of Judaic poetry constantly turns to this source of inspiration. It was the necessary basis, certainly, of all religion in the earlier stages of human history. It was recognised by one of the greatest of the early teachers of Christianity, in a well-known passage that forms the preamble to the most doctrinal of all his dissertations. And we may concede fully that a true knowledge and rational contemplation of the order of the universe, as it is cognisable by the sense and reason of mankind, not only can, but ought to, lead men to a high sense of the moral obligation by which they should feel themselves bound to the Creator, and instil a deep sense of reverence and awe which should lift up their souls from inspiration of the things of beauty and of power with which they recognise themselves surrounded.

But if the higher culture, having established that, thinks that it has shown that such a natural religion either supersedes the necessity

of a revelation, or conflicts with the possibility of a supernatural element in faith, then we must join issue with it entirely. And we challenge its disciples to prove it on their own ground. If they look over the whole range of human history, they cannot find an instance of natural religion bringing any tribe or family of mankind to any adequate sense of moral responsibility, any really purifying or ennobling devotion. We have quoted the Latin race as an instance of men possessed by a *relligio*. What did it issue in in their case? Unredeemed brutality, refinement in vice and cruelty, the degradation of all simple virtues, that ruined their whole civilisation, and made them hail eagerly the dawn of a supernatural revelation, to shed new light upon the darkness of their old superstitions, and relieve them from the emptiness of their own dreams. Or take the Greek race. What more beautiful than the reverent imaginings with which they first worshipped all that in field and flood stirred the heart of man with the sense of awe?—o'er which "the beautiful bright people left a name of omen good." But what did it result in? Profane rites of lewd observance and sensual excess, the deification of the lowest human passions, and an enervation of moral fibre by which the descendants of the *Μαραθωνόμαχοι*

degenerated into the Greeklings of Roman satire.

Facts! facts! friend of the modern culture. Be true to your own scientific principles, and don't give us mere finespun theories as to what the *cultus* of nature might do for humanity, but tell us what it has done. Your facts are strewn thickly over the whole range of human history. Tell us what the *cultus* of nature did to purify and exalt her Egyptian worshippers: what ennobling effects are to be traced to the worship of Baalpeor and Thammuz. Or show a single race of men who, to any real extent, or over any fair period of trial, have been raised in the moral scale and quickened to any true sense of higher life by any religious influence save that of Judaism and Christianity, which are avowedly based on revealed truth and supernatural influence. We do not say that either have perfected their task, for they have had to work on poor human nature, and the most skilful carpentry cannot smooth out of it the knots and warps and shakes that are in its grain. But we do say without fear of contradiction, that the only evidence, on any large scale, of religion having exercised any really regenerating influence upon mankind, is to be found in Judaism

or Christianity, which avow that the religion of nature is not sufficient to redeem mankind, and there must be a revelation to inform men's conscience and direct their sentiment of worship.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUPERNATURAL.

But the true answer to those who would set up a natural religion as a favoured rival to Christianity, is after all not only that natural religion has been tried in the balance and found wanting—the history of humanity patiently holding the scales for all the past centuries of human progress—but rather that no real rivalry is possible between them. They do not move in the same plane, for in any sense that we properly attribute to religion, or in which it may be said that nature can evoke either the sense of conscientious obligation or the sentiment of veneration, Christianity is not a religion at all. It is a new life, founded upon a supernatural communication.

This will be, perhaps, a startling position to take up before a world which has been used to class Christianity as but one among the many religions of the world, and has weighed its claims

with those of Buddhism and Pantheism, Fire-worship and Mohammedanism, as if they all stood upon an equal footing, and were to be judged alike. But we repeat deliberately that to class Christianity as one of the many religions of the world, only to be distinguished as a little better and purer than others in its imaginations, is utterly to misrepresent and misunderstand it.

Christianity never professes to be a religion in the proper sense of the word. It may enlist into its service, and undoubtedly does comprehend, both a sense of moral obligation and the sentiment of worship. And we may say more, that it develops both of these in their highest and purest forms, so that, if it were to be classed among the religions of the world, it need not fear the comparison, but might claim to show as its fruits the highest forms of conscientious ethics, the purest and noblest developments of worship that the world has seen. Where in all ethical writings is to be found a code of moral obligation which can, by any stretch of imagination, be set upon the same footing as the Sermon on the Mount? What has ever ennobled the world of men, and emancipated it from the thraldom of superstition and vice, like the pure lives of Christian saints, the high example of Christian

martyrs, save only the one sublime type of self-sacrificing purity that crowned itself on Calvary, and there was lifted up so as to draw all men to a higher level of life after it? What worship has ever been found to compare with the chaste principles of Christian service, or taught men to forsake the dark horrors of bloody rites and obscene revels with which the natural instinct of mankind has ever led them to profane the name of religion, save the pure light of Christian reverence which has sprung from the simple prayer that first taught mankind to approach the Ruler of the Universe as a Father in heaven, and led them, through all stages of reverent and loving observance, to the highest type of worship which in Christian fanes is offered to Him who has His presence there, felt, though unseen? So that if it were true that we were to class Christianity only as one of the religions of the world, it need fear nothing by the comparison. But although it may embrace within its sphere the highest principles of conscientious obligation and the purest forms of worship, and is strengthened and supported by them, Christianity in itself is not either of these. *Relligio* and *θρησκεία*, in their best forms, may be buttresses of the building. The edifice, Christianity itself, is

neither of these, but a new life, which is supernatural in its origin, and divine.

It is almost strange that this should have been so much forgotten; had we not ample evidence of the power which current phrases have over men's minds, and the fatal facility with which phrases in general use will change from one sense to another, till they come to be used as counters, with which the fancies of men will play as if they were real, long after they have become but the counterfeits of the meanings that they originally bore. And yet it is strange how men can have come to forget the passionate earnestness with which both the Founder of Christianity and His delegates who organised the society of His followers did protest with constant vehemence that that to which they called men was not a *relligio*, not a *θρησκεία*, but a new life. Those to whom they first revealed their message were already in possession of both. Put them on their lowest footing and compare them with any other code of morals, any other ritual of worship, which the world has ever seen prior to Christianity, the statutes and the ordinances of the Mosaic law were marvels of righteous and devout wisdom. So that if it were possible that there were a law given, or any code of religious observance, that could have

given life, then verily righteousness should have been by that law. If we in our better light have gone beyond it since, it is solely because the after lessons of Christianity have lifted mankind bodily to a higher level of thought and feeling. But, standing where we now stand and can survey the religions of the world, the statutes and ordinances of Judaism, in the law of Moses and the worship of the temple, are seen to be immeasurably above any other which the sense of moral obligation in humanity or its sentiment of worship have ever led men to. So that after all allowance has been made for the rude manners and primitive civilisation of the age in which they were put forth, the principles of the law, moral or ceremonial, are established on such an abiding foundation that they never can be upset.

Had those to whom those principles were delivered been true to them, so far as any statutes or ritual could make men perfect, they would have been perfect; and if men had been but able to abide in them they would have even lived by them, with perfect human life, so far as it can be perfected.

But the point on which Christ and His apostles insisted with constant and vehement earnestness was that what they proclaimed was something

totally different from this. They affirmed all that could be said for the religion that they found,—not indeed of its professors in that age, which was corrupt, but of its principles, which were unshakable. But they contended throughout that what they set before mankind was something higher and more divine than any statutes of moral obligation or ordinances of worship could produce—in short, it was a New Life.

And how different was that life from all that the world knew as religious! Did it not seem to lift men to a higher level in which was a new atmosphere? Take the cardinal article, "that whatsoever we would that men should do unto us, even so we should do unto them," which is set before us as the royal law—the Magna Charta of the kingdom of heaven. Nothing religious in that, you would say? No; in any sense that we attribute to religion, there is nothing religious in it. But that it should be thus distinctive of Christianity, proves that Christianity is not a religion. To carry that one law out in all human relations would lift mankind at once, or each member of the human family that might work it out, into a wholly new life. And that is what Christianity is.

Put out of mind any modern strivings about the non-essentials of Christianity. Fix only in thought the ideal of Christianity, as set before us either in the teaching of its Founder, or the example of His perfect life—"the record of the sinless years that breathed beneath the Syrian blue." Remember that the avowed object of Christianity is that we should grow up to that ideal—the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Do we not see that we could only grow up to that ideal by the realisation in ourselves of that perfect law of Christ—the purity of thought and word, the total denial and sacrifice of self, which He alone of men set forth as possible in the ordinary surroundings of human existence, by the carrying out of His own principles in ourselves, which would make our life totally new? And that that would be something higher, purer, and nobler—in a word, more divine—than any sense of moral scruple alone or mere sentiment of worship could produce in us?

These, which are themselves among the highest instincts of humanity, that new life would take hold of and lift into its own higher atmosphere, until religion would become the chief ornament of that purer life by which it would be itself chastened and elevated. But that would not

make Christianity to be but one among the religions of the world.

A strange illustration of this is found in the common parlance that in many countries makes men speak of the religious life as different from the ordinary Christian life. This is not offensive, as it is sometimes taken: it is true. That which in those countries is called the religious life is a matter of petty scruples of conscience or ritual observance—*relligio* and *θρησκεία*. But it is not higher, lower rather, than the perfect surrender of self, the unsullied purity and self-sacrifice in ordinary life, which is the true ideal of Christianity.

Now can natural religion lead men up to such an ideal? No natural religion certainly ever did—that is written plainly on every page of human history. To take the ideas of the higher culture of the day is no fair test, for that has itself been leavened by the principles and spirit of Christianity, which in every civilising race have been permeating the mass of human life until the whole is leavened by them, often all unconsciously to those who are most affected. For the leaven has now been so long working in the world of men, that by the silent growth in Christian life of successive generations those principles have become an instinct, fixed by

hereditary influences in many who are least conscious of it. And it is common enough to hear men vaunting the very first principles of Christianity in violently anti-Christian pamphlets and harangues, in total oblivion that those principles are what Christianity alone has taught the world to desire, against which the instincts of humanity fought bitterly, until humanity was slowly conquered and regenerated by Christian light and life against its own will. The only fair test is to take the religions which have been natural to any race that has never accepted Christianity. And where in them will you find any that have taught the world what is fair, lovely, or of good report, in any way comparable to the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount? or have led their votaries to any goodness or perfectness of life, that can be placed on the same level with the lives of the disciples of the Crucified of Nazareth? In Egypt, Assyria, Greece, or Rome of old? In the children of nature to be found in India or Africa, America or Australia? Many of them highly cultured; many advanced to considerable stages of civilisation and art. But where can you point to the humanity which a religion of nature has taught an ideal or led to an excellence of living that can

be mentioned in the same breath with Christianity?

But there is a further reason why no natural religion ever could lead up to that new life that Christianity offers, which is insuperable. Because the instincts and principles of that life are all antagonistic to those of human nature, being professedly based upon a supernatural influence and communication. The very instinct and aim of nature are self-preservation and self-indulgence; in its highest and best aspects, enlightened self-interest: the very keynote and distinctive law of Christianity are self-denial and self-sacrifice.

Here surely is a radical difference which is insuperable. Take the teaching of nature at its best, equally with its lower and more ordinary aspects; all that it could ever lead men to is the most rational and least debasing self-indulgence, the most enlightened and far-seeing self-interest. Even the enthusiasm of humanity, which the higher culture of the day is wont to set before us as the *summum bonum* that it has to offer, is only a purified and enlarged law of self-interest. It raises us to a height at which we can look above and beyond the petty desires of the hour, to see our own best interests bound up with those of humanity at

large. It is indeed only a wide development of the patriotism which was the guiding and least selfish feeling of old humanity. And as the innate sense of obligation and sentiment of reverence which the noblest of the old Greeks or Romans entertained led them to see their own best interests bound up in the πόλις or *civitas* to which they belonged, and could develop the highest virtue of which they were capable in living for that, even to the extent that they could feel it a sweet and seemly thing for Fatherland to die, so the wider sympathies which the breaking down of race-ties and the better intercommunication of nations in our day have made possible, may beget in man an enthusiasm of humanity which is but an enlargement of the old sentiment of patriotism and the highest and most enlightened form of self-interest; but self-interest it is after all at the bottom. To this, on the contrary, the law of Christianity is diametrically opposed, for it is self-denial, even to self-sacrifice.

Further, the new life of which this is the informing principle is not to be reached by any natural religion, for it is professedly based upon a supernatural communication and influence. Here unquestionably is the key of the position in the great conflict between faith

and unbelief: the one claim of Christianity which above all others the Agnostic, or so-called scientific, spirit of the age cannot be brought to admit.

As the claim is essential to Christianity, we must endeavour to examine fairly what it is. What then is the supernatural, and why is it inadmissible by scientific reasoning? And first, what do we mean by nature? Perhaps it is not so easily defined for the purpose of our present argument, for the definition which would be given by either Christians or Agnostics would be probably found to prejudge the question at issue on the one side or the other. But if we admit the definition of nature as "an observed order in things cognisable by the senses," even if it leaves untouched the question of creative design, it will be sufficient for us. That there is an observed order in things that we can perceive existing is unquestionable—an order so constant that its uniformity is reducible to readily recognisable laws. And when therefore we speak of the supernatural, we imply that there are laws and forces which are beyond and above this generally observed order.

Why should there not be? Why should it be incredible that there should be forces as real, as constant, and as uniform as any that human

observation has hitherto reduced to laws, yet lying in a sphere that is entirely beyond the ordinary observation of human senses? Or, for that matter, it may be that they are only as yet undiscovered, and the progress of investigation in time will discover means of observing them and reducing them to laws. Hundreds of cases might be quoted where forces and laws have become in one age so well ascertained as to be common scientific toys which by an earlier generation would have been deemed absolutely supernatural. And if our definition of nature be true, which makes it an *observed* order of things cognisable by the senses, such forces would have been literally supernatural to a ruder age which had not advanced far enough to be able to observe the forces or events from which a law could be educed. Is science prepared to say that she has so penetrated all the forces of the universe that it is impossible that there should be any not already observed and reduced to laws? If science said such a thing, she would be untrue to her own principles and forgetful of her own history. Take any definition of nature that science can admit, it is quite untenable to say, with any regard to scientific principles, that there is no possibility of laws and forces existing quite above and beyond any

which human intelligence has yet been able to observe and reduce to system.

You claim that man can only know what is cognisable by his senses, or deducible by fair reasoning from what his senses perceive. Be it so. That does not in any way prove that there may not be a whole world of which human senses are not cognisant, and laws equally uniform in that world, of which therefore human faculties can know nothing unless it be revealed by some communication from without themselves; and of this it is of the essence of Christianity to believe that competent evidence has been given. You say that science can recognise nothing but forms of matter and force, because those are alone what our senses can perceive. Well, why should there not be force without matter? Why should there not be matter of such extreme tenuity that it is incapable of gravitation, and imperceptible to our senses? You may say that you know nothing of such forces or matters; but that does not in the least prove that they do not exist. And if you have competent evidence from credible witnesses that such have been observed to exist, it is utterly unscientific to reject their existence as impossible. The question therefore of the supernatural really turns upon the limits of the

natural—a truth almost self-evident, but sadly too often overlooked. Unless we are prepared to prove that the *now* observed order of things covers the whole range of possibilities in the universe, there is nothing *à priori* improbable in the existence of laws and forces which to us so far are supernatural. But if we admit this we cut away at once the *à priori* improbability of Christianity.

For take the two evidences of Revelation which are most scouted as supernatural, and therefore impossible — miracles and prophecy. The former are denied because they suppose a breach of continuity in the laws of the universe, which all observation teaches us to regard as constant. That is hardly a fair statement of the case. Miracles are supernatural—that is, beyond the observed order of things; but if there be forces existent above that observed order which we have not faculties to perceive, these may be subject to laws as uniform as any of those which govern the physical world, and the miracles which we call supernatural may be in the most perfect accordance with those laws. That a higher law or a more potent force may be called into play to counteract another law or force is a matter of the most common observation. There is no more uniform law than that of gravitation,

by which an apple detached from the tree will drop to the ground. Is it a miracle if you hold out your hand and catch it as it falls, and throw it up again? It certainly is a breach of the observed uniformity of gravitation, by which the apple should fall to the earth. But it is as certainly no miracle—only the calling in one force to counteract another. If, therefore, as Christianity asserts, there is a world around us not cognisable by the senses, because not material, or at least of matter of imperceptible tenuity, and organised intelligences peopling that world, there is nothing *à priori* improbable in the action of those intelligences calling into play forces of which we are not cognisant to counteract those which form part of the observed order of things. In short, miracles are strictly supernatural; but they do not therefore necessarily imply any breach of continuity of the laws of the universe—only the calling in of one force according to its laws to counteract another: the one being ordinary, the other extraordinary, makes no difference. Or take again the question of prophecy. That is said to be impossible, because contrary to the experience of mankind. It may be contrary to the observed powers of men, and so far therefore supernatural, but only within certain limits. For there is nothing more clear than

that if a law of nature is known, you can predict with absolute certainty what will be the result from given conditions according to that law. One of the recognised modes of verifying a natural law is to supply the conditions and predict the consequences, which may often be done with great minuteness through whole chains of cause and effect.

Prophecy therefore need not be any revulsion of a law—only the power to predict a certain result, or a chain of consequences resulting from the operation of some higher law or more potent force than any observed by human faculties, and is therefore so far supernatural. But if those higher laws or forces were to be brought within the range of our observation, as they are now known to us only through the evidence of witnesses, prophecy, like miracles, might cease to be supernatural, and be recognised as a perfectly ascertained power.

That at least must be urged in answer to the common objection to the evidences of Christianity, that what is supernatural is incredible. The natural is that which comes within the compass of human intelligence to observe, and all observation ranges it under uniform and constant laws. But there may be a whole world of facts and forces which we have now no facul-

ties to observe, and can know only on the evidence of some revealing witness, but which may be subject to as perfect an order and as uniform laws as any that we do observe. And it may be that some day we shall be able to look upon the miracles and prophecies of Scripture as not supernatural at all, but the most natural things in the world. But to us now, Christianity is unquestionably based upon a supernatural communication, which is expressly stated to be the germ of that new life which it sets before us as its object.

It is therefore something essentially distinct from and above anything that natural religion can supply. There may be much in the contemplation of the observed order of the universe that leads to a strong sense of obligation, and may inform and stimulate that sense of veneration and awe which is an instinct of humanity. But it hardly can conflict with Christianity, and cannot ever supersede it. For that is essentially not a religion, but a new life; and that not a life to which any instinct of nature or any laws of the observed order of things can ever lead us by themselves. For its principles are diametrically opposed to the instincts of humanity and the laws of natural intelligence, being based upon a supernatural communication, even a message from a world of

which our senses have no perception, nor can our faculties take cognisance; but its existence is proved by the witness of Him who was declared to be the Son of God with power, and whose testimony is the spirit of prophecy.

We cannot blink this question. We are untrue to our most sacred duty, and unfaithful to our highest interests as Christians, if we attempt to evade it or explain it away. And when avowedly Christian apologists will try, as many are found to try, to accommodate the teaching of Christianity to modern scientific theories, by giving up all the (so-called) supernatural element in it — watering down the evidence of miracles until it is weak enough to please the palate of an age that can stomach nothing but what has come within the evidence of its own imperfect senses, and bringing the testimony of Christ as the witness of an unseen world down to the level of ordinary ethical teaching, they are no friends, but the worst enemies, of the cause they profess to serve.

There may be, and indeed are, many positions of the loose popular theology of the day which are indefensible, and some outworks, so to say, of the main fortress of our faith which are not essential to its security, and may be abandoned without endangering the

citadel. But the very key of the whole position is the doctrine that Christianity is based on a communication from another world not cognisable by ordinary human senses, and so far supernatural, inasmuch as it lies beyond and above the observed order of things. If modern science ranges herself against this, as unprovable and impossible *per se*, she is driven to one of two necessary positions—either that she has observed all possible laws and forces and found such a world wanting, or that any forces or matters beyond those which human senses have observed or human reason educed are impossible. If modern science takes up such an irreconcilable attitude, we may leave it to herself to choose on which of these rocks she will split, for that she must be wrecked on one or other of these untenable positions is inevitable.

We claim that there is nothing impossible or even improbable in such a world: that a communication from it has been made, and established on sufficient evidence; and nothing in this communication itself or the evidence by which it is established conflicts necessarily with anything that science can legitimately claim as her province. On the contrary, all true experience of man, and the legitimate conclusions to be drawn from the things of sense in which he moves,

prove that such a world there must be, above and beyond the observed order of things, and so far supernatural; that a revelation has been made from it of matters and forces which without such revelation could not be adequately known; and that communication is the germ and basis of a new life for mankind, which without it would be impossible. And if all experience shows that just so far as Christianity has influenced the world of men it has breathed new life into a decaying world, and made all things new for those who without it were lost in error and infirmity, then we may claim that the insufficiency of natural religion, and the reality of a revelation which is supernatural, have been sufficiently proved by the world's own witness unto Christ.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SIN OF THE WORLD.

The apologist for Christianity in the present day finds himself confronted by a most remarkable fact: that the evidence alleged against the truth of the Revelation on which his faith is based is almost wholly negative, while the positive evidence that can be brought to bear upon the question at issue is entirely on his side. And yet a generation which prides itself upon the accuracy of its modes of thought, and is nothing if not scientific, is found to ignore altogether the positive evidence that Christianity adduces on its own ground, and to reject the truth of Revelation on the negative evidence that the course of modern research may seem to offer against it on wholly different grounds.

This is indeed so marked a phenomenon that it would seem as if it must strike not only the apologist for Christianity, but any ordinary believer who takes any pains to inquire into the

grounds of his belief or the arguments alleged against it. But as a matter of fact it is not so generally recognised as it might be that the alleged contradiction of modern thought to Christianity is a pure assumption, resting on no valid grounds of evidence or argument at all, while the evidences on which Revelation claims to rest and the proofs which it offers in support of its own contention are forgotten or set aside; and it is challenged because it does not offer evidences of quite another kind, and proofs arising within entirely different fields of inquiry. It is surely worth while in a matter of such importance to see what is the value of the evidence to which Revelation itself appeals, and to inquire if there is not abundant testimony to the truth of Christianity on its own ground, within the experience of the world, in comparison with which any apparent discrepancies or contradictions that may be gathered against it from other grounds are absolutely unimportant.

We have above shown that there is no such *à priori* improbability in a revelation, supernatural in its claims, that it may be set aside for the supposed sufficiency of a natural religion, claiming to supersede the necessity for inquiring into the truth of anything supernatural; and there is nothing established by

any ascertained facts or fresh discoveries of scientific research that in any direct way contradicts the truth of Christianity. The evidence for it is of the same kind as that on which men necessarily rely to establish the truth of any scientific facts—namely, the testimony of accredited witnesses to facts which have come within their own knowledge, and which they report to mankind who have not the same knowledge generally.

We challenge any man to see in its true light what the Christian Revelation really claims to be, to weigh carefully what it professes to reveal, and verify the grounds on which it claims our assent. If in its main facts and the purport of its teaching it is corroborated by the general experience of the world, any minor discrepancies or apparent contradictions of the fruits of other sciences may safely be disregarded. If we find that it professes to offer the one philosophy of life which human nature is observed to need—to reveal exactly that which other sciences point to as needed to complete and harmonise the results of their teaching, though lying beyond their province to ascertain, and to rest upon evidence such as that on which all other scientific truths claim the assent of rational minds—then we may

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claim belief in Christianity as due from every reasonable man.

That supernatural communication, or Revelation as it is commonly termed, consisting of a message from a spiritual world of which we can have no cognisance by ordinary observation or experience, inasmuch as our faculties can only perceive and judge of things presented to our senses, is a "word of God," in the language of the Bible, declared to be the basis of all spiritual life. It has been made known by witnesses, whose testimony we must weigh; and, if satisfied of their credibility and competence, we are bound to accept their statements as we would those of any skilled observers in a branch of science with which we ourselves are unfamiliar. Then we may apply the results to the test of real experience, and if we find them thus corroborated, we are bound to marshal the facts witnessed to by them among the mass of ascertained beliefs which we accept.

To dwell upon the Christian evidences generally would be a very wide subject. But we would invite our readers to take a general survey of the scope of the Revelation itself; and admitting the competence and credibility of the witnesses to revealed truth, which is a separate branch of investigation, and approaching their

testimony in a fair and rational spirit, to try to draw out what they purport to reveal, and see whether it is not such as all scientific study of human nature does distinctly corroborate.

We may remark at the outset how distinctly the whole tenor of Revelation refuses to be drawn into matters beyond its proper province. Take the opening chapters for instance. There are a number of questions of surpassing interest as to *how* the world was created. These are all passed by, as they fall within the scope of other sciences. The simple fact is revealed that it owes its origin to the will of an intelligent Creator. We read into these simple statements a variety of subsequent theories and preconceived notions as to how or why the world was made by the Creator revealed in Genesis. We have no right to do so, or to go one step further than Scripture doth lead us by the hand. Science and Revelation are at one in this, that if we accept the evidence of Revelation as to the initial origin of creation, both tell us of a gradual evolution from the lowest primary conditions of unorganised matter up to a point where the highest organised creature, man, is produced, where evolution and creation are arrested. With regard to that highest organism, we have two simple statements of facts which ordinary

induction could not by itself discover, but which all observation and experience corroborate.

We have it revealed that as the crowning act of creation, God made man according to an image and likeness of Himself. Clearly it is intended here to indicate some totally different qualities or attributes in man from those possessed by any other creature. These the common experience of human nature, and its comparison of itself with any other organism, emphatically corroborate. There is that something different in man which puts him on a higher level of life above all other creatures; and this *differentia* is seen to be the possession of moral or spiritual faculties, the spirit or πνεῦμα which it is said God breathed into his presence, which is such a difference, that even if science succeeds in proving as a fact what she has only hitherto shown probable as a theory, that in his material organisation man is physically descended by evolution from lower forms of life, the essential difference which Revelation attributes to man is in no way lessened or affected. In what that difference consists is very difficult to ascertain, for until we know more exactly the divine nature, we cannot say what is the precise degree or sort of "likeness" to the divine in man. We know that "God is a Spirit," and

the faculties in man which form the πνεῦμα or spirit, and thus separate him from the highest animals, form the image of God in him. And this is the true answer to the charge of "anthropomorphism" brought against the earlier books of the Bible. If man is avowedly like God, there is no contradiction in implying a likeness of God to man; but what is revealed is not the anthropomorphism of God, but the theomorphism of man—not that the God of early record is like man, but that man was avowedly made in the likeness of God.

Again, having stated this *differentia* in man, we are told of the special purpose with which those higher faculties were entrusted to him. On this human observation can throw but little light, and like all speculations in teleology, to dogmatise on such a matter from ordinary experience or reasoning is vain. Revelation, here strictly within her proper province, does distinctly state such purpose; and from forgetting or misunderstanding that men have been led to much bewilderment. That was, that man should have dominion, lordship, or sovereignty over the rest of creation, which was delivered unto him for that object, as for and under the divine will. There is the purpose of human existence briefly and positively stated; and

all observation and human experience confirm the fact, that man has this sovereignty over creation.

In the most primitive and savage state of life of which we have any record we find man exercising it; and that not by superior strength and agility or physical weapons, but by the mental capacity with which he is endowed in likeness of the divine intelligence which created and rules the world. That those faculties were given for the purpose that man should have such dominion is plainly revealed: that for that purpose they were adapted and sufficient is proved by all subsequent human experience.

Nor is it unreasonable that the Creator, for whose pleasure all things are and were created, should place at the head of the physical creation a being endowed with faculties to understand and carry out the divine will. We forget this "pleasure" that the Creator is revealed as taking in His works; and in the wretched Manichæism that has crept into popular theology, look on the material world as itself evil. The teaching of Revelation flatly contradicts this, and tells how the Creator saw all that He had made, and it was good; and for His pleasure all creatures are and were created. And nature, when she shows myriads of animal-

culæ existing for ages to raise the coral reef above the sea, or to deposit shells that harden into limestone cliffs, or worms that toil to assimilate the solid rocks into mould capable of nourishing organic life, certainly offers no contradiction to the theory from her analogies that the highest race of organisms were created to have dominion over the rest, and develop and rule them according to the will of the Creator. As a matter of fact, that is what they have done; and as the principle of agency is written on every page of creation's record, the last link in the chain of agency is the creation of agents having intelligence to understand the divine will, and carry it out.

Here then at the very outset of Revelation's story we are introduced to that higher or spiritual world, of which the rest of the record professes to establish to us the laws and the forces. Man, in his material frame of the same molecular structure as the rest of the organic creation, χοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς, yet differs from all other creatures in the possession of a class of faculties higher not only in degree but in kind. Man may be physically himself the result of a whole series of evolutions of which science professes to give us the links. Or these may be with equal force and propriety

alleged as the homologies which prove unity of design in the creative intelligence. But whether by evolution or creative interposition, man certainly does stand physically at the head of a wonderfully designed κόσμος or organic order, in all his parts and elements the head of, yet akin to, all the rest.

But he has a life within himself which no other creature has—a class of faculties which lift him to an entirely higher level of existence. These are of a sort that no physical investigation can trace to the source, for they belong to a world above all ordinary research—the spiritual world—of which the πνεῦμα or spirit of man, the πνοή ζωῆς breathed into him by the Creator, is a manifestation or communication.

It is probable that these early records speak of an evolution of historic man from lower forms of human life, or of the creation of a lower and a higher type of humanity in successive stages, in the accounts recorded in Gen. i. 27 and ii. 7. There is a sufficiently marked difference in the two accounts to warrant us in concluding this. And if the conclusion is established, it is wonderful what added light it throws upon the genesis of man as we know him, how many apparent difficulties in the scriptural narrative it clears up, and how strongly it is corroborated

by all the facts of primitive human existence, so far as the progress of ethnology has established them for us. But be that as it may, the true history of the Bible professedly begins with the position of one human pair from which all the civilising races of mankind are sprung, who at the dawn of history are recorded to have been placed on the earth, endowed with peculiar faculties for a particular purpose, even the endowment of a higher and spiritual life, which was a reflection of the higher life of the Creator Himself, in order that they should have dominion over or rule the rest of creation. All history, experience, and science agree that all civilising nations must have sprung from such a primæval pair, and that they have such faculties, adapted for just such a purpose.

Therefore we may claim history and science in support of revealed truth. To speculate beyond the plain statements of this record upon the early condition of man, and read into them pagan myths of a golden age in which the first fathers of the human race were mighty semi-heroic beings, far above any of their descendants in physical stature and moral attributes, is hopelessly misleading and vain. Yet perhaps few of us are aware to what an extent we ordinarily do weave these old myths and pre-

conceived notions into the simple Bible narrative, and then think that the teaching of anthropology, which points to mankind as generally emerging from a state of primitive barbarism, is in contradiction to revealed truth. As the Bible says nothing of these pagan myths of a golden age, all that anthropology contradicts is our misreading of it.

All that Revelation asserts is that man was created at the head of all organised life, and endowed with special faculties, which make a higher life in him than is found in any other organised being, for a certain purpose. All anthropology, physiology, history, and the general experience of mankind concur in testifying that man has those higher faculties, adapted for precisely that purpose.

This probably affords the true explanation of the Fall and its consequences. The possession of moral faculties implies moral choice, and thereby moral responsibility. The highest animals may indeed have some powers of reason and some instincts of affection. But no one could attribute to any animal moral choice or moral responsibility. We cannot conceive any man (save an idiot) being without them. It is part of that likeness of God after which he was created, that man, as he

alone has the power of knowing the divine will, should have the power of choosing whether he would do it or no; and the burden of responsibility according as he exercises that power. The first time that man exercised that power in contradiction to that will was the turning-point in man's after fortunes. For it introduced into the economy of the world sin, and all the consequences of sin. We have been so led away by three centuries of controversy over various matters connected with the expiation of sin that we have almost forgotten what it properly is in itself: *ἁμαρτάνειν* —to miss a mark, to fall short of an object, to fail of a purpose. That is the true and essential notion of sin, implying also in the case of a moral agent moral responsibility for such a failure. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door."

There in brief is the history of the Fall: it was the first instance of man's choice exercised in disobedience to God's will, which he was created to carry out intelligently on the earth. What that instance exactly was is only faintly recorded. The narrative may point, as some have thought, to some primæval rite of heathen incantation, of which the cut-

ting of the mistletoe by the Druids, or the tree and serpent worship so widely to be traced in early Eastern rites, may be the survivals; or to the use of some intoxicant and maddening vegetable drug, such as was used of old in pagan incantations, or by the Obeah men to this day. Or it may point only to a simple test, put before man to try his obedience, with no particular significance in itself. This is not at all clear, and we must leave it until it is made so. The narrative is obviously told in metaphorical and apocalyptic language; as is made clear by the recurrence in the last pages of Revelation of allusions to the Tree, the Fruit, the Serpent, the River of Life, when the scheme of redemption shall have made all things new. The details are thus manifestly impossible to argue over. But the main facts are very clear: that man, created for a definite purpose, that he might have dominion over the earth and its creatures according to an intelligent perception of the divine will, deliberately disobeyed that will on an early opportunity. In so doing he sinned—ἥμαρτεν—fell short of or missed the purpose of his existence, and thereby incurred the necessary consequences of doing so. As to those consequences, we have bewildered our-

selves with assuming that the penalty affixed to man's sin was an arbitrary act of vengeance, and caused much unnecessary offence to many whose consciences recoil from the vindictive presentations of the divine will with which they have unhappily been made familiar. But what does nature in all her analogies teach us more plainly than that there is a law of the life of every created organism, whose existence depends upon its living according to the conditions of that law, and that any infraction of it causes its death; and that not as any arbitrary act of vengeance, but as the inevitable consequence of the working of uniform causes?

And further, nature teaches us, according to the reading of all true science, that the conditions of organic existence in this world are such that invariably those organic types or individual organisms which the least fulfil the laws of their being do die out, and those who best fulfil them alone survive; and that the gradual operation of this constant law results in the production of the highest types of organic excellence. In short, that those types which fulfil the purpose of their existence according to the law of their being survive into higher and more perfect life, and those which fail in that purpose and do not fulfil that law inexorably perish. Is not that

exactly the teaching of Revelation with regard to that higher life in man of which it reveals the conditions? If there be that divine will for man, of the character that has been revealed to us, all observation and experience tell us that mankind has missed or come short of it. That is a matter of universal human consciousness. Further, all experience tells us, from observation of human history in countless phases, that all well-being and happy existence, for man or for those that are subject to him, are only to be found by his action in accordance with that will, and any infraction brings suffering and loss. All observation also shows that persistent failure brings death. When nature

> "From scarped cliff and quarried stone
> Proclaims a thousand types are gone,"

she proves this, even without the imputation of moral guilt. And in moral agents the universal testimony of all physical and natural laws shows that to break them entails death as the inevitable penalty. Revelation says the same as nature says, but more than any observation and experience can reveal; for it shows the purpose for which man was created, the true nature of those higher faculties with which the dominant race of Adam was endowed in the πνεῦμα or spirit

which was breathed into him from God, and the inevitable consequence of deliberate failure or infraction of the divine law in the death of man, not merely as a living physical organism, but as a moral and spiritual agent. That at least seems the plain lesson of the Fall, if we can let Revelation speak for itself, and divest our minds of the schemes of oriental fatalism, or the myths of pagan cosmogony, which the logic of John Calvin and the genius of John Milton have worked into the tissue of modern belief. That too in every line of its teaching is endorsed by the testimony of all human experience and the subsequent revelations of inspired records. But the first necessary key towards understanding aright what the "Fall" of man really consisted in, which lies at the bottom of all succeeding revelations of God's designs and all after history of mankind, is to grasp what was the purpose for which man was created and specially endowed—his failure in which was the cause of all evil consequences to the race, and called forth the scheme of redemption by which these consequences of evil were to be remedied.

That is the main point on which the light of Revelation is first centred. Before it there is no attempt at any dates or detailed history. Great isolated facts are stated, necessary to our

understanding how man came into this world at all; but without historical detail or scientific classification, which are only attributed to the chronicle by our *à priori* expectation that we are to find them in it. There is palpably also a mystical or allegorical mode of narration, which is common to revealed teaching, and especially analogous to the concluding writings of the Apocalypse. It is as reasonable to pin our faith to bald prosaic and literal interpretations of these earlier records as it would be to make our faith in the Apocalypse stand or fall with the belief that the "vials" spoken of in it are literally such as we are familiar with on the shelves of a chemist's shop.

Revelation is a monograph or scientific study of one sole subject. It begins with the mission of one special race created and endowed for a particular purpose. Antecedent causes or incidental circumstances attending the appearance of that race are lightly sketched in broad and general outline, and in such language as would be most readily intelligible by a primitive oriental people, whose modes of thought and diction it adheres to, as it was primarily addressed to them. We expect it to solve all manner of other questions, and generally assume that it was written by and for matter-of-fact and

prosaic Englishmen of the seventeenth century. When we find that those other questions are ignored as beyond the proper scope of the Revelation, and that the prosaic interpretation of highly figurative and poetical documents of oriental antiquity is untenable, we throw discredit on the record, when the fault is wholly in ourselves.

Our attention is first really fixed on the failure of the race of man in the purpose for which it had its mission. There the true history begins, and traces out the consequences of that failure which we now know technically as "the Fall," and a divine scheme for remedying it, which, as it is gradually worked out, will bring about the restoration of all things according to the original purpose of the Creator. The light of Revelation that sets forth the divine purpose and the practical failure of humanity is the only adequate explanation that we meet with of the great problem which all human experience admits and witnesses to, how and why it is that human life is such a chaos of conflicting aims and unsatisfied longings—such a scene of distraction and suffering and failure. That it is so all observation tells us; but after the reason why it should be so, unaided reason can but grope in hopeless darkness for need of revealing light.

Revelation has supplied the only explanation that is consonant with the facts of all history, showing that it is that failure, the falling short of the law of God given him as the condition of his being in that higher world within him of which the faculties are implanted by the special endowment of the Creator—it is that Fall that has brought misery and distraction and suffering and decay and death into the world of men.

The course of the world soon showed it. From the moment that man fell from that law for which he was created, human life became a scene of unredeemed violence and wrong, until a great catastrophe swept the mass of mankind from the face of the earth. Such catastrophes have been common enough in the geologic records of the earth. A science that shows us glacier-rolled boulders on the top of the highest hills in England need surely see nothing to stagger at in the mention of a deluge which overwhelmed the plains of Central Asia, whence Revelation and ethnology agree in teaching us that the race of civilising man originally sprung. If, as they again agree in stating, that whole race had its original descent from one parent stock, they could not, within the dates assigned by these earliest records, have dispersed much further than the limits of those central plains. And if

our contention is true, that the scope of the revealed record is to trace the history of one race alone from whom all the dominant families of civilising man are descended, as working out one sole divine purpose, a convulsion of nature which reached as far as that primæval race had then spread is sufficient to satisfy all that Revelation states about it. That all early traditions of men which have been handed down to us should preserve the memory of such a cataclysm is a very strong argument in support of its truth. Our mistake is to weave in myths of Pandora's box and Deucalion and Pyrrha, and many popular misinterpretations of the simple narrative of Revelation, and think that its historic accuracy must stand or fall with our understanding of it. We have but to turn to the antiquities of Josephus to see that the interpretation put by an educated Jew of our Saviour's day upon these old records of the Flood was something quite different from our conception of it, which has been largely shaped by the presentation of Noah's ark in the toy-shops. And to this day tradition could point out to Captain Conder a huge stockade of untraceable antiquity on the top of a high hill overlooking those plains —Tell Neby Nuh—which would have been just such an enclosure as would have served the pur-

pose for which the "ark" was designed. The plain facts stated are that the failure of man as a moral agent in that for which he was created became more and more palpable and gross, until the earth was filled with violence and misery because of it. It was aggravated and increased by promiscuous marriages of the dominant race of Adam with the "daughters of men," the descendants of the lower races of humanity. Revelation gives us an account of their origin and many incidental allusions to their existence, but without any attempt to trace their history, as it is beside its purpose. But it accounts for the selection of one representative of Adam's race to be preserved, by reason of his own pure descent ("perfect in his generation") and personal fitness to be the progenitor of a new family of mankind, that should be sent forth again with the same mission and purpose set before Adam originally, and which he failed to fulfil—that he might have dominion over the earth as an intelligent representative of the will of the divine Creator.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT NEED OF HUMANITY.

From the mission of Noah we have a fresh starting point of human history. In him we have the common ancestor from whom are descended all the civilising races of mankind, in the threefold leading divisions or families under which Revelation and ethnology agree in teaching us they are to be traced and classified. Here again in its statement of the origin of those three families the sacred history is careful to bring its facts to the test of ordinary observation, and when so tested they are found to be singularly corroborated.

It is strange indeed—or would be, did we not know the constancy with which tradition is cherished and maintained by primitive races who are unacquainted with written documents and are trained to trust to memory, so that an Arab sheikh will give you the record of twenty or thirty generations of his ancestors as glibly as

an English schoolboy will the multiplication table — to trace how exactly the names of the fathers of all civilising nations, as preserved in their own nomenclatures, tally with the list given by the scriptural narrative. Take the race of Japhet, the *audax Iapeti genus* whose energy and restless efforts have pushed them into the wide predominance foreshadowed for them from the first (Gen. ix. 27). Of his sons, the patriarchs of the Aryan race of modern ethnology, we find Gomer living in the Κιμμέριοι of Homer's days and the Kymry of our own English history, truly identified by Josephus with the "Galati, formerly Gomerites" — the great Celtic race, the pioneers of civilising man, as they spread round the north of the Euxine and on to the western sea. Whether we can trace the name, unpronounceable to the Mediterranean races, by which the *Teutones* or Deutschers called themselves, in Gomer's eldest son Ashchenaz, and identify him with the *Tuisconem deum, terra editum*, whom Tacitus tells us the Germans celebrated as the founder of their race, cannot be proved, but is far from improbable. And we may possibly identify his *filium Mannum* with the "Manu," the deified legislator of the Eastern Aryans. For sacred and profane ethnology agree in attributing a large oriental branch

of descendants to the Japhetian or Aryan stock. Madai was the progenitor of the Medes, an eastern Aryan race, as surely as Riphath and Togarmah of the Phrygians and Armenians of Asia Minor, or Tubal and Meshech of the Thobelites of Josephus (whose name survives in Tobolsk) and the modern Muscovites. So Javan lived in the Greeks (*Ἰάονες*) and Ionians, and his sons Elisha in the inhabitants of Elis and Hellas, and Tarshish in the Thracians and men of Tarsus, as Tiras in the ancient Tyrrheni or Etruscans, and Kittim and Rhodanim in the men of Cyprus (whose chief town was Citium) and Rhodes.

It is true that if we follow the ethnological divisions of the family of Noah closely we find that they exclude the great Turanian, Negro, and Australioid groups. But that only strengthens the contention already alluded to, that the race of Adam was a higher creation or development from lower forms of humanity. Such we find as a substratum of all anthropology over all the great continents of the world, with strongly marked and uniform characteristics. Their existence makes many allusions of the sacred writings intelligible which would be unaccountable, and throws added light upon the forcible reiteration of the mission with which the selected

race of Noah was again sent forth to subdue the earth and have dominion as intelligent agents of the Creator's will, and ultimately to bear a part in the divine remedy which was foreshadowed for the great failure of humanity.

In all developments of human history we can see three main stages or phases of life, well-marked and distinct, to which all the varied phenomena of humanity may be referred. We have first the primitive barbarian or savage, the "natural man," or ψύχικος ἄνθρωπος of St. Paul—man as we find him in his primæval state before any civilisation has reached him, with characters that are constant all the world over. Manners and customs may vary slightly, as the circumstances and conditions of life for each family or race may have differed for previous generations, and hereditary experience may have moulded the race for after times. But the essential characters of the barbarian or natural man are much the same in all. He has much in common with the animal, and something in common with the divine. No race has ever been known so low or degraded in the human scale as not to have some instincts of a higher life, some consciousness of right and wrong, some affections of our better humanity, some dim acknowledgment of a divine being, whom they are instinctly im-

pelled to seek after and propitiate. No race known to history has ever been without traditions of duty owed to the Supreme Being, and a sense of guilt if that duty, however dimly understood, is left undone. All this lifts mankind in the lowest stages of development in which we ever find man to a higher level of life than any of the animal creation yet discovered. Even if that higher life be shown in possibility of development rather than in actual attainment, it is distinctly a higher life even in the lowest man, the most primitive savage, which has something godlike in it, and lifts him above the rest of creation by a clear line of demarcation.

But with this higher life there is ever a vast preponderance of the animal instincts of a lower nature which man has in common with the brutes, and by which, if he is left in a state of nature, the instincts of his higher being are all neutralised. The law of the natural man is the law of the higher animal life; to live only to eat and drink and sleep; to fight for his wants, or for mere passion and sexual jealousy; to gratify each impulse of his physical appetites, careless of others' rights or enjoyments; to acquire whatever is needed to satisfy those impulses by greed and cunning, and if need be, by brute force; knowing no law but his own

desires, or the force of superior strength or cunning. There is the "natural man," as we see him in the savage of modern days, and in the primitive races of early history; or as the record of Revelation shows him, in the picture of human life before the Flood.

But in the natural man thus constituted there has been a great need generally felt, and many attempts have been made to remedy it. The consciousness of a higher life, possible through all those lower impulses and instincts, has given birth to a great yearning for a social order and common government to check those passions which reduce human existence to the life of animals, and encourage the higher qualities which can alone bring progress and prosperity in the place of anarchy and outrage. Men are soon conscious of impulses and propensities that must be ruled and restrained, or there can be no real happiness or welfare in life. The instincts and desires of which they naturally seek the gratification are found fatal to their own enjoyment and interests in life unless they be rightly ruled; and their own wills are powerless to rule them. As the heathen poet plainly put the great fact of human consciousness—"*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor.*" And constituted as men are,

as members of a great human family, it is soon found that their true happiness and progress are only to be discovered in common order and mutual good offices. One man's interests or pursuit of happiness must conflict with the enjoyments or rights of others, unless the aims and energies of all be ruled for the common advantage, and made to harmonise by the mutual interchange of good, the subservience of selfish interests to the welfare of each other and of all. To live in the simple pursuit of each man's own interests or desires is barbarism. To harmonise the conflicting claims of men, and make all human life work together for the common good, is the distinctive aim of civilisation. And to make this possible the cravings of men's instincts and their impulses of self-interest must be made subject to some rule by a power which is able to enforce it.

That, without which all human life is but a chaos of corruption and indulgence and strife and fraud, is the great need of humanity. And the cry of man's heart has ever gone up to some higher power: "Take us, guide us, lead us; we are passionate and aimless; we are weak and ignorant and blind. Some power to rule us we must have, some government,

for our own and for each other's good, or human life in this world is a failure and a wreck!" That is the cry which has gone up from the depths of human consciousness since the very beginning of human social life. From the earliest years of which any record remains to us even to this present day, from the rudest form of primitive society to the complicated civilisation of the mightiest empire, we see mankind striving and struggling for some perfect social order, an ideal government of the world.

In that all reason and Revelation are at one—all history, sacred and profane, the light of human experience, and the light of divine inspiration, entirely agree. And having cast its light upon the first phase or stage of human life that we alluded to—the natural man, as shown in his unredeemed state, to the Flood—Revelation proceeds to tell us of the second phase or stage that mankind ever reached, the first effort after natural civilisation, in the building of Babel.

Perhaps there are none of the early scriptural records whose sense has been more distorted and misunderstood than this. We read into it old pagan myths of the giants scaling heaven, or call up pictures set before our infant eyes of the

workmen striving to build a round pagoda above the clouds and smitten with sudden discordant speech, until we are ready to dismiss the whole as a nursery tale or pagan legend from beginning to end.

In reality it was a historical step or turning-point in the career of the human race, of the greatest importance in itself, and one which it is necessary for us to rightly grasp, for the proper understanding of much that follows. It was the first attempt to form a civilisation under a common government. The whole family of the dominant race of mankind moved from the highlands of Central Asia, whence tradition and history alike represent them as emerging after the Deluge, until they came to the fertile plains watered by the Euphrates and the Tigris. Multiplying rapidly, as savage man in temperate and fertile climes does multiply with wonderful rapidity, they soon realised the danger of being split up into separate groups or sections by divergent interests. To obviate this they said: "Let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach to heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth." They had the natural human craving for mutual help, and felt the need of common government. They recognised that the

progress of mankind was bound up with civilisation, or some banding together of the separate units of the human family as citizens of a social order; and that that could not be effected without a centre of unity and a restraining power. The attempt to raise this tower to make mankind a common name and centre of unity, lest they should be scattered over the face of the earth, coincided with the time of Nimroud, the early despot of the human race. The tower itself was to serve the purpose for the then still united family of men that the keep of each mediæval baron was to serve for his own little principality. It was to be the centre of unity and rule in the first attempt to form a civilisation and government for mankind under a general reign or despotism.

Here we come within the realm of history; and that corroborates the teaching of Revelation with remarkable exactitude. Babel (or Babylon) under Nimroud was the first great attempt to form a world-wide empire or universal civilisation, which has been the dream of humanity then and since. And history shows that such an attempt, if it had succeeded, could only have ended in riveting the fetters of a godless government over the whole race of man, the despotism of brute force or unholy cunning—

that it would have checked all true progress, dwarfed and stunted the growth of humanity, and blighted the destinies of the earth, even as all successive efforts after natural civilisation and godless government which the world has seen in different epochs have checked and dwarfed and blighted the true interests and progress of mankind in the various countries and climes where they have been attempted.

Babylon, Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome —one attempt after the other has been made to set up an universal civilisation and world-wide empire over the families of mankind. Each presents separate marked characters, and has tried special methods of civilising and principles of ruling; but all have failed, because they built up on natural principles only, and were thus forms either of force or cunning. And any such organisation must bear with it the inherent failure of human nature. For it will but end in giving power to those who will use it for their own selfish ends and personal aggrandisement, and not for the welfare of the community and the rights and interests of each member of it. And the innate barbarism of the natural man has been the canker at the root of all mere godless systems of civilisation and government, and made them but the reign of force

or cunning, as of the wild beast or the serpent in man.

History also agrees with Revelation as to how this and all succeeding efforts of the sort were frustrated by the divergence of family interests and development of race ties among men, chiefly expressed by varieties of language. How quickly these may be developed among primitive and colonising men we see in the early divisions of our Teutonic ancestors, who, sprung from a common origin, in a few generations were hostile tribes, who fought each other into a common truce, and in time cemented into unions which have formed the nations of modern Europe. But Revelation tells us, which history cannot, why it was so: that it was necessary for the divine purpose of the Creator of the world that mankind should be dispersed over the earth, to replenish and have dominion over it; and for that end was grouped into families, after their generations, all with their allotted destiny before them.

Thenceforth it is remarkable with what constancy the inspired records call our attention to the destinies and duties of nations, and to their share in working out the designs of the Ruler of the universe. The only thing that is more remarkable being the persistency with which we

ignore all such allusions to nations, or interpret them as if they referred to individual souls. And we do it with an ingenuity worthy of a better cause. We first mistranslate "nations" or "national," by words such as "Heathen" or "Gentile," which have a sort of theological ring about them, and then set them down as counters to be played with in a great game of misinterpretation, which may stand for any value we like to assign to them. If there is one rule in interpretation to which we are bound to adhere, it is that "where a literal meaning will stand, the farthest from the latter is commonly the worst." A "nation" is a thing that has a perfectly plain and definite meaning, and exactly the same meaning in the Bible that it has anywhere else. And when we read in it of the duties or dangers or destinies of a nation or nations, the only safe rule is to take the words as referring to nations, and not in any esoteric sense that we associate with "Gentiles," or merely to individual souls. And taking them thus we find that one chief purpose of the Bible, on which the sacred writers constantly insist, is to show the true aim of national existence, its duties, dangers, and destinies, in relation to the one divine purpose originally revealed with reference to all human existence, that mankind

should have dominion over the earth as intelligent agents of the Creator's will. This it does, having first shown the failure of man when left to his own unaided reason and conscience, which results only in the natural man or barbarian; by showing in the second place man's failure when gathered into communities, for purposes of mutual civilisation and government, by merely human instincts of order and progress. And we see that all human history has been a record of such attempts successively, and of their failure. The nations that have in turn risen to eminence and played leading parts upon the world's great stage have each approached the problem set before mankind from different points of view, and with special gifts of character to make experiment on different principles. The Babylonian, the Median, the Grecian, the Roman Empires; the Egyptian, the Phœnician, the Indian, the Chinese—all have striven to civilise and rule the world within their reach. And all have failed, because the innate failure of human nature is a radical defect which human nature by itself cannot cure. Natural civilisation only comes to mean refinement in self-indulgence and vice. Natural government only results in the tyranny of the strong over the weak. The many are ruled by the few, or by the one, for their own

advantage, by the aid of brute force or fraudulent cunning; or the majority dominate over the minority, irrespective of their rights and interests. The few may have been advanced to a higher degree of refinement or culture, or have ruled with a pomp and splendour to dazzle the imagination of mankind. But the rulers themselves have been instinct with the passions and propensities of man's lower nature: their civilisation has become only refinement in selfish indulgence, and their rule a display of force, as of a wild beast that tramples and rends, or the cunning of a serpent. And the masses of the ruled have been made to yield to these powers of force and cunning, and to minister to this greed and self-indulgence, until at last in each case the system has broken down, and each government and civilisation has become anarchy and wreck.

The first of these attempts was the Babylonian—the civilisation and empire centred round the tower of Babel. It was the first, and the most gorgeous and complete, of the great empires of the world; and the one with which the sacred writers were the most familiar. Its rise and progress therefore were to them typical of all the others, and through all after-pages of the record "Babel" or "Babylon" is the generic name of all mere human civilisations and god-

less governments. But having sketched its rise, and shown the radical vice with which its failure was ensured, and the manner in which the attempt was frustrated, the inspired record leaves the rest of the progress of Babel and its congeners to secular history, as their proper province; and only touches upon them thenceforth incidentally, as they may affect the working out of the great scheme which it keeps steadily in view, or as their course may bring them in contact with the agents in that scheme. That is, the establishment of the *third* great stage or phase of human life—the development of a higher civilisation, a divine government of the world, which history and Revelation, the light of all experience, of all inspiration, alike point to as the one thing that can satisfy the great purpose of man's creation, and remedy the great failure of human nature; that is in one well-known phrase "the kingdom of God."

Having briefly told us of the dispersion of the nations, the record at once proceeds to tell of the first step taken towards the realisation of this hope for humanity in the call of Abraham. Each nation of the future moved out from the central plains of Asia, East and South, and West and North, in its little parent cluster

of patriarchal tents, to work out through centuries their share of the great problems for the government of the world that was set before them by Him who "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." Amid them all one race was ordained to be the chosen instrument for working out the high designs of God for the regeneration of the world and the establishment of His kingdom.

And in the general dispersion one patriarch set forth, possessed with a belief that was a destiny for mankind. How the call came to Abraham we are not told. We can readily understand how in his tent in Ur of the Chaldees he may have mused over the evils of human life, and mourned for the anarchy and tyranny and social wrong and suffering of a violent and barbarous age. Traditions still linger in the East that he was cast into the fire by Nimroud for refusing to join in the idolatrous rites that he had set up—the false religion which despots have ever tried to use as the great lever for moulding mankind to their will—and was miraculously preserved. But

however the call may have been brought to him, in the faith that there was a social order possible for man, that should be based upon the will and law of God, and not on the barbarous tyranny of a human despot—an order in which all human happiness and welfare and progress should be shaped out by godly faith and righteous service, and not by the brute force of a strong hand and unscrupulous will, or the fraud of serpent cunning—in this faith in God as the rightful Ruler of the world of men, he set forth, big with the destiny of mankind. For he, and he then alone, rejected the baseless fabric of a godless civilisation and empire that men would set up for themselves; and he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

In that faith, that call, we see first shadowed forth the great scheme of God's providence for the regeneration of mankind, and the re-establishment of His own proper sovereignty over the world, to which thenceforth the sacred record constantly adheres. That scheme, in its first stages, required the separation to Himself of a chosen body of men, to bear the knowledge of God before the world, to witness to His will, and keep alive the worship and service of Him, until the promised seed, dimly foreshadowed at

first, should be manifested to the world, and born of that chosen race—who should redeem mankind from the curse and bondage of sin, and destroy the works of the devil—in whose establishment of God's kingdom upon earth "all nations of the earth should be blessed."

CHAPTER IX.

THE DIVINE REMEDY.

THE working out of that scheme, the course of that purpose along the channel thus marked out in growing strength and fulness, is the whole after-history of the Bible, and of the world.

We are out of the realm of geology now, but we are not out of the realm of science. We must remember that geology is not the whole of science, as her votaries would persuade us with the enthusiastic self-sufficiency of youth. She is the infant of the family of sciences, and the cries by which she would arrest our attention are out of all proportion to her importance. The science of history is quite as true, and far more old and tried a member of the family. And the truth of the Bible is to be tested, as in all its pages it appeals to be tested, by its correspondence with the historical facts of the experience of mankind. Only let Revelation speak for itself, and every page will be found corroborated by the history of the world.

Year by year the progress of historical research has been bringing to light ample corroborations of the historical details of the inspired record, until such a mass of support has been accumulated to the facts of sacred history that it is quite impossible for any one, with any regard to scientific principles of criticism, to reject the record as a myth or fabrication, as was commonly assumed by the unbelief of the last century. But setting aside details, what has not been yet so generally recognised in the general purport of revealed teaching is the way in which it makes the boldest appeal to scientific confirmation that can be made—that is, to experimental verification.

"Given certain conditions, certain results will necessarily follow." That is the great test to which any science can appeal in confirmation of its truth. The acknowledged appeal by which men of science are wont to prove a law that they claim to have established is to produce such conditions artificially, and then demonstrate that the results foretold do infallibly issue from them.

That is precisely the test to which Revelation appeals. It reveals a law of the spiritual universe, and asserts that the results follow upon the conditions, wherever present in human his-

tory. Then it shows the conditions artificially produced, and the results following according to demonstration in the history of the chosen race.

This is indeed so plainly written upon the face of that history that it is strange to find it so generally overlooked in the mists of modern controversy. The whole course of the fortunes of the race of Abraham is set forth to us as being a type or sample which was recorded for the instruction of all succeeding nations. In the earlier generations perhaps this is not so clearly seen, as the record is one of ordinary human lives, with the passions and temptations which beset all families and individuals. But there is a steady growth toward the point when from a single family or nomad tribe, the race of Abraham became a nation, of numbers sufficient, and with characteristics strongly marked enough, to enable it to hold its own thenceforth among the nations of the world. Indeed we may say that those characteristics were exceptionally strongly marked, so as to have been indelible to this day, even through all the strange vicissitudes of Jewish history; and that it was one main purpose of their earlier fortunes to stamp them thus indelibly. The one leading idea with which they were possessed was that they were marked

out for a special destiny upon the earth. That that strange course of events had been shaped by Divine Providence for that end is plainly declared by Revelation. That those events did happen, and that the feeling of the nation was that it was all so purposed and guided, is simple matter of history. And from their formation into a nation it was written on all their records that the purpose of their national existence was this which we have stated.

A law was given, purporting to be a law of life for them, by a supernatural communication from the Ruler of the universe, through a chosen mouthpiece or mediator. It was made to embrace all the chief parts of their social life—standing ordinances were decreed to put them in continual remembrance of it, and a ministry of officers ordained, with a perpetual succession, to bear witness to it and enforce its provisions. Here was a law revealed of the moral world, under artificial conditions especially set up to exemplify it. It was distinctly and emphatically foretold that their prosperity and welfare would entirely depend upon the way in which they kept it; that just so far as they should choose to abide by that law they would be prosperous and strong; and just in proportion as they might forsake it they would sacrifice

their welfare and greatness, and become mean and degraded and oppressed. And not only their prosperity, but their national existence, was to depend upon their abiding by that law as a nation, for it was to them not only a law of living, but a law of life. The challenge was thus laid down to the future, and all their subsequent history verified it. Just as they kept the law delivered to them, so was their life, both national and individual, prosperous and strong. As they forsook or broke it, so were they visited with private loss and suffering, and their national existence was miserable and degraded, and at the last destroyed.

Thus the whole record of Israelitish history was the verification of the law revealed, of which their national existence made experiment. And we cannot conceive a more crucial or more distinctly scientific test of the truth of Revelation than that which it thus challenges and submits itself to.

A law is revealed and declared to be the law of life for the world of men, so that just as it is kept or broken, so shall the life of men, singly and in societies, be found vigorous and prosperous, or degraded and weak, even to the extent of the total loss of life and national existence if that law is wholly disregarded and set

at defiance. Artificial conditions are set up: a nation selected and trained for the special purpose of the experiment; the law revealed to them in a definite form and ordained as their law of living under the most solemn sanctions. Every condition is supplied that is needed to enable them to keep it, with ordinances as a standing witness to this law, supplying all the necessary helps and inducements to keeping it. An appeal is made to the future; and all their subsequent history is found to be a long verification of the appeal. Just so far as they kept that law, so was their life in exact correspondence with the conditions enunciated and the principles declared. Thus the whole history of the chosen nation was exactly the same appeal to experimental verification as a lecturer on the chemistry of combustion makes, when he lays down the law that a lighted taper plunged into an atmosphere of oxygen flames with a special brilliancy, and if introduced into carbonic acid is extinguished, and then verifies the law by actual experiment. A precisely similar appeal is made by Revelation. A law is enunciated, conditions for artificially testing it are set up, and the experiment verifies the appeal.

We may therefore claim that the truth of Revelation upon its own ground is established

by evidence just such as that on which science in all other branches of research relies for its demonstration, where absolute or mathematical proof is impossible from the nature of the case. But this is not the only test to which we are referred. The uniformity of law is a doctrine as strongly insisted upon by Revelation as it is by physical science. It is plainly taught that that law, the principles of which were definitely declared to the selected nation, is equally the law of living for humanity in all other associations; and just so far as the conditions are applicable, so will it be found that the welfare and progress, nay, the very existence of any human life higher than that of brute animals, varies entirely according as they keep that law or violate it.

That all human beings have a perception of that law of their higher life, innate in them by their own reason and conscience, however unformed without the added light of Revelation, is one of the very first axioms of inspired teaching, endorsed by the universal experience of mankind. For the possession of those faculties of the higher life that is a reflection of the divine is the *differentia* which separates mankind from the animal creation. And therefore when the nations which have not the

law (revealed) do by nature the things of the law—as the higher instincts of all human beings do universally tell them to acknowledge and respect the principles of the law revealed for man, even when they do not know it to be divine—these having not the law (revealed) are a (natural) law unto themselves, and show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts the while accusing or else excusing one another.

Thus the whole record of human experience may be appealed to in confirmation of the law revealed; just as the law of combustion, when verified by artificial experiment in unmixed atmospheres of oxygen or carbonic acid, is confirmed by the greater or less brilliancy with which any light is found to burn, according as oxygen or carbonic acid predominate in ordinary atmospheric conditions. So, too, the experience of all human history is appealed to in verification of the law revealed, showing how, besides the experiment under artificial conditions made in the case of the selected nation, the universal testimony of human existence may be brought in confirmation of the general law. The prophets of Scripture over and over again "take up their burden" against the nations of the old world, and foretell their future according as they

keep the law of God for man or violate it. Babylon, Nineveh, and Egypt, the cities of mercantile Phœnicia, and the nomad tribes of Arabia, are brought in evidence now and again.

"Given the conditions, the results will follow accordingly." The nations of the earth since the dawn of history have afforded experiments under most varying conditions; and it has been found that as they have kept or broken the law of God for the world of men, the results have inevitably followed. How a more perfect or more scientifically exact demonstration of the truth of Revelation could be supplied, it is hardly possible to conceive.

But there is something more to be seen in the record of the chosen race. Its career was a great step in the progress of a divine scheme for the regeneration of the world, remedying the great failure of mankind in fulfilling the divine purpose, when left to man's own reason and conscience, and establishing the divine rule over the world through intelligent agents, which that failure had forfeited.

We have seen in what the failure of the natural man consists, and that the great need for which humanity craves and yearns to remedy that failure is that of some perfect social order, under some rule which can enforce it against

the natural passions and lawless instincts of mankind, which make human life a chaos and a wreck.

Side by side with the various efforts which human nature has successively made in the different families of mankind to supply this perfect social order, and to find a rule which can enforce it by the unaided reason and social instincts of humanity, is seen a scheme supernaturally revealed, a divine polity for mankind. On the one hand, we have the record of manifold strivings after the great aim of human nature, civilisation, or the making men citizens of an ideal social order in which alone perfection can be reached or even social existence maintained; and government, a common rule by which the destructive instincts of the natural man can be restrained, and his selfish energies turned to account for the general good. On the other hand, we have a divine order, a civilisation of a higher life, supernaturally revealed, in the well-known phrases, a heavenly city, and a kingdom of God.

In whatever way we view it, on whatever footing we may place it, the Mosaic constitution is unique. Whether we regard it as, what it purports to be, a divinely revealed dispensation, or even as a mere system of human statecraft, it

is a thing *sui generis*, of which the like has never been known before or since in the world. It was an attempt to organise the whole of a nation's life and policy on the principle that God was the personal King of the chosen people, and their system of laws a heavenly constitution. God was their King, not only after a metaphorical or spiritual fashion of speech (as in later days by borrowed phrase we may now term God a Heavenly King, without thinking what is implied by the term), or in matters of individual religion; but in a literal sense, and in matters of ordinary politics, as Pharaoh might be to the Egyptians of old, or George III. to Englishmen, so Jehovah was literally set before the nation of Israel as their King. All the framework of their public and national institutions was made to turn upon this central principle. Their judges, their warriors, their statesmen, all claimed authority as the officers of Jehovah, the King of Israel. Their public life, their social ordinances, even their sanitary regulations, all were based upon His personal government. Their forces went out to battle as the armies of the Lord of Hosts; their magistrates dispensed justice in the gate in His name, as ours on the strength of the Queen's Writ and Royal Commission. Even the most ordinary

economic regulations, such as the distribution and cropping of the land, rested on the principle that the soil of the promised inheritance was a grant from Jehovah to each Israelitish family, and therefore inalienable, save by mortgage for a limited term; and as the produce was His, the land must enjoy her Sabbaths, to restore its fertility by periodical rest.

In contagious diseases, the patient was ordered to show himself to the priest as the sanitary officer, and abide by his regulations as to isolation and disinfection; and if he claimed a cure, he was to receive a clean bill of health from him. While the most minute and ordinary regulations necessary for public health and cleanliness were made obligatory on this ground, that "the Lord thy God is in the midst of thee, therefore shall thy camp be holy."

In short, the whole constitution of the Israelites was a "kingdom of priests," not according to the strange misinterpretation of that term which later controversies have read into it, but in the proper sense, that the duties of government were entrusted to the ministers of Jehovah. In this theocracy, for the first and only time in the history of the world, we see a national constitution grounded and built upon the principle that God was the direct and personal King

of the nation. And as their national life was thus, as we should now say, made wholly religious, so their religion was intensely national. We may be reminded that there is nothing new in this: that the general instinct of mankind has been to make religion the great bond of national unity, and in all early races the *βασιλεύς* or *Rex* has been customarily the chief minister of public rites. But there is this great difference between the manifestations of a sense of religion as a component part of public life that can be pointed to in ancient records and the Mosaic ordinances. In the former, religion has been made a part of the government of the people, in order that their religious sentiments may be stirred up by public rites, to lead them to submit to the domination of their rulers. In the Jewish theocracy it was the whole social and political life of the people that was made subject to the personal rule of God, in order to ensure the carrying out of His law; and the object of their ritual was not so much to stimulate their religious sense, as to restrain and guide it by specified forms of lawful ordinance. Religion is an instinct of human nature. Sacrifices were no new thing prescribed by Moses. They are the form of worship which the impulse of conscience has driven men to in all early

ages, when burdened with the sense of guilt, or the terror of an unseen Power above mankind, whose mercy was dimly understood.

The ritual of Moses aimed not so much at stimulating as at restraining and informing this sense, by putting all forms of worship under the sober limitations of law, so as to preclude the wild excesses of fanaticism and the gloomy horrors of superstition, which were the outcome of uninformed religious fears when stimulated by such dark rites as fed men's superstitious fancies in the worship of Moloch or Baal in "groves and hill-altars," or the vile profanities indulged by the votaries of Astaroth or Thammuz. In contradiction to these, the ritual law aimed at precluding all such superstitious observances by making its ordinances of worship, under definite forms, a part of the national constitution; and all pointed to a definite object. God was their King, and the King of all the earth, therefore His people in their rites were to sing praises to Him with understanding. The whole purport and scope of the Mosaic dispensation was to set before the chosen nation a heavenly constitution, a divine government, as their law of living; and so far from seeking to stimulate the sense of religion as an instrument of rule, as despots have often done,

it rather taught men to look upon their religion and their politics as consecrated together—branches of one great scheme by which all their life in all its relations was to be ruled by and grow up to Jehovah as their Supreme Head, the fount and source of all honour and justice and order and law.

Was this the fulfilment of Abraham's desire, when "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"?

In part it was; but it was only in part. Could the ideal have been kept wholly true—if it were possible that a people could be organised on this principle, that all social duties and public rights and national institutions, and the thousand mutual interests and obligations which interlacing make up the web of all national life, could be uniformly ruled by reference to the personal government of God, a Supreme Ruler of the universe, whose ways are those of righteousness and true holiness—then there would be a perfect human commonwealth, the greatest possible happiness, progress, and order that humanity is capable of.

But the theocracy of the Mosaic dispensation could not be the perfect realisation of the "desire of nations," for two reasons, if for no others. Firstly, such a constitution could only

be possible for a single nation, and that a small one, while the "city" round which the faith of Abraham centred was to be the privilege and blessing of all mankind. And secondly, it would require that each member must of his own freewill and choice accept such a constitution, while revelation and experience alike teach us that "all are not Israel that are of Israel." The natural man lies at the bottom of us all, and the lawless instincts of man's lower nature cannot be eradicated by simply living under a legal constitution, however perfect in itself, without some regenerating motive to lift him above them to a higher life; and so the law was weak through the flesh.

Thus the theocracy was but temporary, because the elements on which it worked were temporal; and just so far as they were natural it was transitory. The selfishness and lawlessness of men were too strong and violent for the bonds of order and government which were themselves a shadow of good things to come. Self-interest and passion could not be restrained by a code of laws, however perfect, unless they could be themselves overcome by an inward change in men. So the discord soon showed itself between the ideal principle and actual performance.

Years before the primitive constitution of Sinai was broken, it had come to this, that every man did what was right in his own eyes, because there was no visible king in Israel. And for protection against their enemies without, and their own passions and dissensions within, an earthly monarchy was demanded; and with the protest of the last of the prophets and judges who clave to the primitive ideal of the Mosaic theocracy, it was established. This was felt to be a lowering of the national life; but it had been foreseen, and was inevitable. And the ideal was never wholly lost: it only was changed to a new complexion. When the chosen nation under the rule of their early kings had arrived at the highest pitch of their national greatness—had consolidated their public life and brought it to a head under David, with a visible centre in the city of Zion which was the seat of his dynasty—they seemed to have reached a fresh and ampler fulfilment of the hopes and promises which God held out to their forefathers. Thenceforth in all the writings of their saints and prophets, the great designs of the Ruler of the world, to which their race had been called and consecrated, were bound up in the words "city" and "king."

These have been indeed in all early races of

men the two great concrete expressions of any idea of social order and progress, which have left their enduring mark upon human thought even to this day. "Civilisation," the making *cives* or citizens of a social order; "politics," the affairs of a πόλις or organised community; "kingdom," rule and government, the working of some authority to restrain and direct all the units of human societies, with all their divergent passions and interests, for the common good—what are all these but the highest questions that still stir most strongly the minds of mankind, while they bear in their very names the marks that they were the first interests which drove the rude forefathers of every race to draw together in their little "burhs" and village communities or πολεῖς; to counteract by mutual help and common good offices the lawless instincts and disintegrating passions of the natural man, the mere brute impulses and self-interests of barbarism which make a wreck of human life, by making them *cives* or citizens of an orderly and progressive social life?

But though these have been thus expressions of the common ideas of mankind, as to their highest and most necessary interests, they had to the chosen race a peculiar and sacred sense,

inasmuch as they expressed to them the realisation of the promise of God and the faith of their forefathers, that in their heavenly city and their God-given King all nations of the earth should be blessed, the wreck and failure of the world of men should be remedied, and the divine government of the world should be made manifest. The stern logic of facts, as time went on, showed the vanity of this expectation; and in the downfall of their monarchy and reverses of their nation, which punished their neglect of the divine laws with which they had been entrusted, it was seen that the fulfilment of their cherished hopes was yet in the distant future. But they never once lost faith in the ultimate realisation of those hopes. And the rest of the history and national life of the Jews showed two marked features. The best and noblest of their leaders, while they accepted the government of the nation, strove to impress upon the people that it was as God's representatives that they did so; and that they were no less God's people, and Jehovah was no less their King, because a mortal heir sat on the throne of David; and further, kings and priests and prophets sought to lead the people to see that this earthly kingdom was incomplete and transitory, and that for the true

theocracy that alone would satisfy the desire of nations, they must look for the fulfilment of a larger hope.

And so the world went on its course, slowly drawing near to the time appointed for the dawning of a new day of its life, an era that should separate the old world from the new. The nations of men at large went on their allotted course, gradually finding the bounds of their habitation, and working out problems of the government of the world by the light of nature; and finding, alas! that the natural civilisation of mankind means only refinement in self-indulgence and vice, and natural government ends but in the rule of brute force or fraudulent cunning for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many.

While the select nation, an exemplar of the divine laws for the government of the world, was also affording a terrible lesson of the peril of despising the light of heaven when revealed on earth, and the doom of those who fail to fulfil the purpose of their being, from time to time the warning voices were heard of those who flashed divine light upon the dark ways of a world sunk in ignorance, and groaning beneath the burden of its own offences against the law of Him who made it; and revealed the

divine purpose slowly making its way through the darkness of evil times to a better day. As each great heathen empire of old rose to predominant power, the light of prophecy showed its course of greatness and inevitable downfall; for the rule of the mere strong hand and unscrupulous will, which is the only force of earthly dynasties, as it makes a growing nation great, carries with it the elements of its own decay when once the prime of national life is passed, and the development of natural faculties in common life only develops the self-interest natural to man. The course of the great empires and civilisations that successively rose to dominant power in the old world was sketched under the symbols of wild beasts, whose rending, overbearing ferocity fitly represented the essentially predatory characters of the old world despotisms which one after the other held sway.

And the witness of revealed truth in clear bold accents challenged still the confirmation of the unerring future, that all these great despotisms and gorgeous civilisations of the nations of men should come to nothing and be cast down to ruin and desolation, while the one true hope of humanity should in time be realised, the heavenly city should be established, and a divinely ordained government of

the world made manifest. In the appointed time, the law should go forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem; the mountain of the Lord's house should be established, and all nations should flow unto it; and the God of heaven should set up a kingdom that should never be moved.

There was the challenge fairly laid down. So far as the old world empires and civilisations were concerned, their destruction was literally fulfilled, through the working of the very forces and in the very way that was foretold, in perfect verification of the law declared, according to the conditions. The constructive prophecy requires special treatment, as the truth of Revelation hangs on the issue.

CHAPTER X.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

Time rolled on—the oracles were dumb—the voice of prophecy, which from time to time had told the people to look for the coming of the true kingdom of God, the desire of nations, had been silent for some four centuries, when another voice, which seemed as that of one of the old prophets revived, broke in upon the silence of the chosen race. At a time when, if ever, the whole foundations of the earth must have seemed to them out of course, this voice bade them look for the speedy fulfilment of all their most cherished hopes—to turn from the crime and fraud and violence and evil passions which polluted alike the common life of the Jewish people at that age, and the ideas of those who set themselves up as their leaders. For "the kingdom of heaven was at hand;" and in view of that, which whatsoever defileth cannot enter, all sin must be forsaken, and all other service must be foresworn.

And after that John was put in prison, a greater than he came in his stead, to whose coming he had witnessed, preaching the good news of that kingdom, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of heaven is at hand; repent ye, and believe the good tidings."

Here is a distinct, emphatic, and unmistakable appeal to the leading idea of all former revelations which had been made to mankind through the chosen race, uttered in the very forefront of the Revelation of Christ, and maintained through all its course from first to last. Nothing, indeed, is more remarkable than the persistency with which all Divine Revelation recurs to this leading idea through all its pages, and in all the varied strains in which it speaks to mankind,—nothing, except the persistency with which in modern theology we shut our eyes to the real significance of that idea, and ignore the constant reference of inspired writers to it. Like the few opening chords that form the theme of some great sonata—a simple refrain which runs through all its manifold variations, now rising into loud strains that stir the blood like the blast of a trumpet, now sinking into the delicious languor of soft melodies, that fall like autumn leaves fluttering to their bed of withered moss, but ever bearing the memory of those few

opening chords—a steady undercurrent whose presence is always felt, though now running unseen below, now swirling strongly to the top, at last coming boldly out in a crash of pronounced harmony that all other passages have artfully led up to, but the expansion of those simple opening chords through all—we have the refrain of all the varied strains of Revelation constantly recurring; never wholly lost, but never more boldly or sharply struck than in the opening notes of the New Dispensation.

"Dominion" or "kingdom," "city" and "covenant," such words are the keynotes which by their constant recurrence link all the various strains of Revelation together from first to last, and prove them to be all modulated on one dominant theme; or they may be compared to the tiny correspondences which prove unity of design alike in the most simple and most complex developments of creation—little links that bind the embryos of higher forms of life to the maturities of lower, and exhibit to the practised eye of science a perfect chain of cause and effect by a uniform law through all organic life, but are unintelligible puzzles to the uninitiated. So to any scientific student of Revelation these constantly recurring phrases are all links that bind together the several stages or phases of

revealed truth, and prove the unity of design which runs through the whole scheme from the beginning to the end.

A divine government of the world through the intelligent agents of the Creator—how lost through their failure in the purpose for which they were created in His image or likeness!—the consequences of that failure, in the sin and misery and distraction to which the world has been reduced through their transgression of the law of their higher existence, and one gradual process revealed by which that sin or failure could be remedied, and the proper rule of God over the world restored—this is the one leading theme which runs through the whole of Revelation, from Genesis to the Apocalypse. And nowhere is it more clearly and sharply struck than in the opening notes of the New Dispensation which was inaugurated by the mission to the world of Him who was the Desire of Nations, the promised Seed, the expected Messiah, the Son whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world.

The very central object of the mission of Christ, which He proclaimed from first to last, was to establish a kingdom of God among men. That was exactly the purpose to which all prior revelations had witnessed, as the subject of all

promises of God to the patriarchs of old—the great need of the world, as testified by the universal experience of mankind to be the one thing wanting for human welfare and existence, which all civilisations and national organisations have set before themselves as the goal of their hopes, and failed in attaining. An instalment of this was given in the theocracy, a divine constitution for the chosen race, which was the type of a larger hope for all mankind. But this was confessedly imperfect and transitory, and all voices of the prophets had pointed to the coming of One to establish the true kingdom of God over all the world—the Desire of Nations, in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed.

That was the point on which the expectation of the select people who had the oracles of God was fixed with an intense and earnest longing, which grew as the failure of the old world to realise any such expectation was made manifest, and the transitory nature of their own national type of it became more and more clear. To this intense and passionate expectation of the people John addressed himself when he bade them repent, for that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and at the first note of such news they crowded round him, and held him for a prophet indeed.

This same intense and passionate longing, the fulfilment of all types and prophecies, and the drift of all prior revelations, Christ claimed to satisfy in Himself, when He came forth and preached that the time was fulfilled and the kingdom of heaven was at hand, and called them to repent and accept the glad tidings. We have now forgotten all this. All that long expectation and silent evolution of God's designs have become buried beneath the sands of later centuries, and hardened by the fire of many burning controversies. When we dig down into the strata of inspired records of those times, and unbed the phrases which speak of the kingdom of God as the one thing that the people of God looked for, and Christ offered Himself to bring about, they are to us but the dry fragments of old shells or fossil bones out of which all life has gone; and we put them on the shelf and ticket them off as curios in our mental museum, or give them to little theologians as toys to play with, or missiles for each other's heads. But the one thing that we do not do is to see in them imperishable records of once living organisms which, to the eye that sees according to knowledge, bring up a whole world of teeming life and steady development, whose existence and conditions are absolutely necessary for us

to realise if we would read aright the truths of this later world that has been built up on them.

What the Jews of our Saviour's time looked for and lived in hope of—which all the records of past ages, all the institutions of their law, all the voices of their prophets, all the fortunes of their own history, and the experiences of all nations of mankind, had pointed to as the one thing which the world of men needed for its welfare and very existence, and which the promises of God assured them of, to be brought about through the agency of their own nation and royal line—was the establishment of a divine government and civilisation, a new order for the regeneration of the world of men according to the perfect law and will of the Creator—a heavenly city, a kingdom of God, in which all nations of the earth should be blessed.

We have described Revelation in a former page as a monograph. The one subject of it is in a well-known phrase, "the gospel." But what does that mean? We have so wandered from the original ideas of things that the word has become synonymous in our minds with some special logical position of later controversy, which each school of theologians claims as the central point of their own system. Nothing is more

common than to hear some particular doctrinal position claimed as "the gospel," and accusations freely hurled at those who do not take that position as not preaching "the gospel." Not that the doctrine is always the same. To some it is the Lutheran doctrine of justification, to others the Calvinistic doctrine of election, to others again the Wesleyan doctrine of conversion—something different for each theological school, but some special controversial position for each and all.

But what is it in its original stratum—the proper context in which we first find it with a living meaning? Never once do we find it in connection with any such special doctrine or theological position at all. Often as the expression is used by Christ and His apostles—almost more often on their lips than any other similar phrase, and recurring in all possible forms—it is always in this connection, the "good tidings of the kingdom of heaven" (or of God), whenever the context is filled up, and with that understood when not expressed; but we find it in connection with no other sense or idea whatever. It is hardly possible that we could have any more distinct declaration of the scope and aim of the mission of Christ, and its identity with the main object to which the whole of Revelation points, than we have in this constant

reference to the kingdom of God as the good tidings which His advent was to realise upon the earth.

We forget all this, and, confused by the mists of controversy which the heat and dust of our own wrangles have raised, when we meet with phrases which tell us of the kingdom of heaven, we entirely miss their significance, drop the idea of a "kingdom" at all, and only see references to a future state of bliss for our own souls, to which we narrow the notion of "heaven." Nothing surely could be more misleading. There is the same difference between the "kingdom of heaven" and heaven itself as there is between the British Empire and the island of Great Britain. And the leading idea of the one, a dependency ruled by the laws of a distant centre of government, is exactly the idea of the other.

There is this also to be borne in mind by us in studying these phrases of Holy Writ, that to Eastern minds such notions as we should express by abstract terms were only intelligible when put before them in a concrete form. "Divine government" would be a vague and hazy idea to them abstractedly, but in the concrete form of a "kingdom of God" it at once became precise and intelligible. So, too, with a cognate expression that we may equally term a keynote of Revela-

tion. "Civilisation," in any connection, to an Oriental or any primitive race, would be a term conveying little or no meaning. The thing which "civilisation" implies to us, the social order under which the rude lawless instincts of the natural man can be restrained, and his energies guided towards the mutual good of all—by which alone can any progress and happiness or even continued existence be secured to any human beings—this thing was keenly felt to be the chief need of human nature; but it was expressed under the concrete name of "city."

The πόλις or *civitas* of the ancients was to them far more than our acres of bricks and mortar are to us; it was the embodiment of the idea of order and mutual good and social progress, in such a way as to call forth deep sentiments of reverence and affection; for it symbolised to them all that made human life progressive, orderly, and secure, in marked distinction to the nomad insecurity of predatory hordes, or the universal warfare of the savage existence which the "natural man" lived in the deserts and thickets. And it is only when we can free ourselves from the ignorant conceit which reads centuries of later controversy and habits of thought and modes of expression wide as the poles asunder into the simple records which form the basis of true theo-

logy, that we can realise what those records really mean, and what Revelation is designed to tell us.

The chief purport is already shown to be the establishment of a new social order and divine government of the world, which, as it had been shadowed through a divinely ordained theocracy for one nation, chosen as the type or sample of such a constitution, was made possible through the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, to redeem the world from sin, and regenerate it into a new life of the service and knowledge of God, that His name should be hallowed, His kingdom should come, and His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. There is Revelation's own claim, laid down as a challenge to the world; and the world's experience, which is all ancient and modern history, must be called in evidence to substantiate or disprove it.

What the natural man is like is well known. We may study him on Polynesian creeks and Arabian deserts, on the rolling prairies of Central America or the banks of African rivers. Free from many vices of later civilisation, and preserving even in his lowest degradation some gleams of a higher life and aspirations after a world above this one, with ever some moral and intellectual faculties, which mark him off from

the highest animals over which he has dominion, and are a reproduction, unmistakable though faint and distant, of the Divine Image within him. But ever treacherous, cruel, and sensual—false to the pure and perfect law of God, and a failure in any purpose that we can conceive him created for as a moral agent. Yet in him we find invariably some sense of right and wrong, a conscience which accuses or else excuses him in what he does, as before a Higher Power; whom he never fails to recognise, however dimly understood. A perishing and decaying race, dying out in many lands before their own vices for want of a higher law to restrain and guide them. There is the natural man (ψύχικος ἄνθρωπος), unable to receive the things of God or to live unaided to the Divine Will. Then we have the further stage—civilising man, whose records are writ in many pages of history—a dominant race that may be traced in its many branches back to one parent stem, from which by a threefold main division all civilising nations of mankind may be derived, by the concurrent voice of ethnology and Revelation—a race capable of order, progress, and rule, with instincts that have led it in its many branches, and under countless different conditions of life, to try the varied experiments of civilisation and govern-

ment by their natural reason and conscience. And with what result? In the old world an universal failure. The reign of brute force or fraudulent cunning; the tyranny of the strong over the weak; refinement in vice for the rulers, and degradation of the ruled; the development of all that is sensuous and self-indulgent in art and luxury, with the debasement of all that is truly godlike in affection and aspiration—even the highest and best instinct of human nature, the desire to seek and propitiate the Supreme Power of which man's soul bespeaks the existence, lowered to mere degrading superstition, or used as an engine of State oppression. A gradual downfall in all the old world empires to ultimate ruin and decay, after great periods of glory and prosperity for a time, owing to the inherent weakness of moral force and evil passions incident to humanity, which dominate in rulers as well as ruled.

And then, a law revealed, claiming to be the law of man's being, from the Creator and Ruler of the world, declared to be the foundation and essential condition of all welfare, happiness, and progress—nay, of the eternal existence of men as sentient beings and as living souls. This was manifested first in one particular family selected for that end, to serve as a type to all

the world, to show how man's welfare, progress, and very existence do depend on whether he will keep that law or no.

And then the time of testing came, the crisis of the world's history, when the Son of God came Himself to judge the world, and try it as in a refiner's fire, in which all that was perishable and worthless should be consumed, and a new order inaugurated thenceforth which should establish a new and divine life for the world—a kingdom of heaven upon earth.

The declared result of His visitation was to condemn the age or generation which He visited as hopelessly evil and corrupt; but not so much to *destroy* or *punish* as to *save* the world by purifying and chastening, and to make all things new. And the witness of the world has endorsed this appeal as verified: that the old world was hopelessly corrupt and its civilisations effete; that at the Christian era it did go through a fire of purgation, and the result has been a new age in its life, in which the laws of God have been gradually spread over the world, His sovereignty acknowledged, and the new force of His Spirit has breathed new vigour and life into mankind. To understand adequately what that kingdom of heaven has been to the world it is absolutely necessary for us to compare it

with what we know human life to be, even at its best, without it.

The pictures of depravity which the writers of old Rome of the Christian era, such as Juvenal and Tacitus, have left us of their times, show a civilisation and an order breaking up by the upheaval of passion and misrule which they had grown too thin to repress, like a sheet of ice in a thaw, when the stormy south-west wind lashes up the sleeping lake into sudden fury. And a most marked characteristic of all their writings is the sense which they show that the one restraining and informing power that had made their States strong when young, which being lost in their advancing age, all national strength and public conscience and common manliness went with it, was the force of law, based on the recognition of a Higher Power. All quote the fathers of old Rome as having built up the State on the fear of the gods, and holding their sway over the world through submitting to the divine rule in themselves. But by the days of the earlier empire their religion had degenerated into mere superstition, still believed in by women, and scouted by all who called themselves men. At the best it could but inspire superstitious fear or minister to fanatical excitement, while consecrating vices by the legendary

examples of the gods, and fostering foul passions by such rites as those of Aphrodite and Dionysus. Natural civilisation, natural instincts of government, natural religion, had had full trial through the empire of successive dominant races in all forms. Fallen before the iron might of Rome, all others had become incorporated by her all-devouring despotism, merged and swallowed in her overshadowing power. And in Rome of the Augustan age, gathered to one head, were to be found the city and kingdom of the natural man, the Babel of the world at the full period of its development, and now at the very crisis of its fate.

And the chosen race, the holy city—that too had had its course, and strangely marked it was. The verification of prophecy was complete: in all the vicissitudes of their fortunes, which reached from the pinnacle of prosperity to the abyss of degradation, they had verified with the fidelity as of a scientific demonstration the predictions that just as they lived up to the law of God revealed, so would it be life and order and strength to them; as they forsook it, so would it end in decay and degradation. The turning-point of their fortunes had come, and the day of their visitation was at hand. And what was the result in their case? Failure too; but wherein

that failure lay is most instructive for us to grasp.

We cannot read either the record of sacred history or the remains of secular writers without being convinced that the public life of the Jews at the Christian era was corrupt. The sarcasms of Juvenal or Horace, and the contempt of Tacitus, may be partly due to the singularity of Jewish customs as compared with those of other nations, and the strangeness of their religious ordinances, which were an utter puzzle to the heathen, and indeed seemed to them to be no religion at all. But there must have been great moral degradation in the race that could seem to other nations only the *colluvies omnium gentium*, and have it said that *inter se nihil illicitum*—"a race the offscourings of all people"—"having among themselves no vice prohibited." And such stern strictures are endorsed by the Apostle who was himself an Hebrew of the Hebrews, when he said that "through breaking the law they dishonoured God, for the name of God was blasphemed among the nations through them."

But how was this? Not through the imperfection of the law itself, which was holy and just and good. But there were two causes that neutralised it. In the first place, the law was

"weak through the flesh;" unable, from the mere fact that it was only a law, to overcome the natural passions and infirmities of men; for the most perfect constitution ever must be unable to overcome them, unless there be in men the spirit to rise to the law above the flesh. That spirit was wanting; and the law stood by in lofty grandeur, to show how men fell naturally short of it, even when living under its shadow. To put it into modern diction, the law was verified even by the failure of men to keep it, because the consequences were seen to follow upon the conditions, exactly as had been predicted. The force was wanting which could alone enable man to live to it, the measure of the Spirit which was necessary to overcome the passions and infirmities of the natural man, and so the law failed.

And, in the second place, we may note the very point wherein this failure especially showed itself; for the finger may be put on the exact spot whence the error flowed, as shown in the Pharisees of the time of Christ. For that was gathered up and focussed in them, being the dominant religious party among the Jews; and His scathing strictures upon them supply the clearest light in which we can read the true lesson of that failure. It was precisely because they mistook the scope and purport of the law revealed,

and failed to see in it a law of living, as it was ordained to be, that thence their failure to live by it flowed. Everybody now hurls moral stones at the Pharisees, and none with greater persistency and ardour than those who are their legitimate successors. They were simply the religious world of the day; and they were exactly like the religious world of our day, or of any other day. It was not that they were mere formalists, in our modern sense of the word, or that they were consciously hypocrites and impostors, for they were true to their religion, such as it was, and were as ready to die for it themselves as to put any one else to death for it. But their whole idea of the service of God made it no part of their real life, but a thing to be put on outside, like the mask or buskin of the play-actors of old, leaving the real man unchanged beneath. Their religion was, in the strict sense that we have endeavoured to define the word, a mere matter of formal scruples and external rites of worship. And their notion of keeping the law revealed was to exalt the ordinances which had been given as memorials of revealed truth into objects of veneration, while they put aside the weightier matters, the justice, mercy, and faith to which the law had been given to lead them to live up. They had had their full period of probation, and now the time of their

visitation had come, and their day was setting amid lowering clouds that betokened a long night of storm and tempest.

The era of Christianity was indeed the crisis of the world's history. The gorgeous magnificence of the old world empires had had its day, and the result was to be seen in the wind-swept dust that wrapped the tombs of the Pharaohs and shrouded the winged bulls of Nineveh or Babylon. The subtle intellect and art and philosophy of Hellenic cultivation had had their day, and the outcome was to be seen in the ruined porticoes of Athens and the *Græculus esuriens* of Roman satire. The discipline and organisation and power of rule of the Roman world had had their day, and the fruit was growing ripely to a head in the armed legions which, after conquering the world, bred up a military despotism that crushed the life out of the Empire City herself.

The chosen race had had their day, to test and try whether men could by themselves live up to a perfect law when revealed; and they had demonstrated that, left to themselves, they could not. The flesh was too weak and the passions of the natural man too strong; and the law, which in itself was holy and just and good, was turned into a matter of petty superstitious scruples, and outward ceremonies of worship. It

had been made no law of living by them, therefore it was no law of life. The divine purpose declared was as yet unfulfilled; the willing agents of the divine will not yet found among men to have the dominion upon earth; the true heavenly city and kingdom of God—a civilisation and rule among men in which God's will should be done on earth as it is in heaven—were so far unrealised by any attempt that had been made to establish them.

But the harvest of the world's progress through all preceding ages was ripe, and the sickle was at hand to thrust in and reap the results. The coming of Christ was indeed the great crisis of the world's history—to test and try all these phases of human existence and energy, and when they were found failures, to pass them through the fire of trial, and melt them down into new moulds and purer metal, of which the true kingdom of God should be forged. The burden of all His utterances was that this He came to do, and that kingdom was at hand.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NEW LIFE OF THE WORLD.

MANKIND has never shown a truer instinct than when it has agreed by common consent to make the birth of Christ the era of its own new life, which marks off all the ages that went before as the "Old World," and dates its existence thenceforth as that of a "New World." We now hardly realise all that that term implies. Living in the full light of Christian truth, under institutions which have been formed and moulded by the influence of Christian teaching and Christian ordinances, we in this year of grace can hardly realise what the life of the old world was without them. Like the man who could not see the wood for the trees, we have little idea how the influence of the light and freedom which Christianity has brought to the world has ramified into all departments of human life and spread its shelter over them, like the tree of mustard in His own similitude.

We may have glimpses revealed now and

then of the horrors which human life without Christianity is capable of, when we read of the sanguinary holocausts at Dahomey, or of a Mahmoudieh Canal whose banks are literally built up with human corpses dead beneath the lash of a tyrant's slave-drivers; or may remember the atrocities which the brutal soldiery of a heathen despotism can wreak when their fears are stimulated and their native savagery let loose. But even when we read of such things happening, perhaps we scarcely realise what it would be to live under them as the normal condition of life, instead of finding them now and then crop up as ghastly horrors at which the world turns pale. That such things were in truth the normal condition of life "before Christ" in the world at large, as they may be called only too natural a condition of life in the "before Christ" era which may be assigned to every nation and people prior to the introduction of the law of God through Christian teaching into their national institutions, is plain to any student of history. The horrors of human life when man's natural state was the state of war; when the weak were the natural prey of the strong, and once captured, had absolutely no rights but as the chattels of the captor; when human life was worth no more than the snuff of a candle, except for the fear of armed

kindred to avenge it; when lust and passion were absolutely unbridled, save by the power that each man or woman might have to fight for themselves or their own children or wives; when thousands of captives could be marched back after a successful foray in triumph to the amphitheatre, and there butchered to make a Roman holiday; or the grey hairs of old men and the tender limbs of women torn by wild beasts, for the one crime of being Christians, before the greedy eyes of refined Roman ladies, who gloated over the scene with the same artistic interest as our gently nurtured girls would take in a pantomime, and not one shred more of pity or remorse; when simply for not joining in pagan public rites, men, women, and children could be torn to pieces by dogs in the skins of wild beasts, or in robes steeped in pitch, tied upright to posts and set fire to, as beacons to illuminate the night, while the head of the State drove about as a charioteer to enjoy the spectacle in his own imperial gardens, and the rank and beauty and fashion of the queen city of the world looked on!

What wonder that an empire such as the old world despotisms could only be thought of by those who had the light of God within them as a wild beast, a θήριον, whose very nature was to rend and trample and destroy! or that the era

which was to put light and order and peace and happiness in place of the nameless horrors of human life under the old world empires was foretold as a new life of the world, a kingdom of heaven upon earth! Could we, snug Christian people, who sit at home in the peace and security of a land which the light of revealed truth has illuminated, and under institutions which the revealed law of God has been the chief instrument of moulding into shape—could we exchange all this for the horrible grinding cruelty, the vile lusts, and utter hopeless blackness of the life of the old world, we too should be ready to hail the return of one year of life in Christian England now as a manifestation of heaven upon earth!

But when we have such a striking verification of Christ's own words, and such concurrent testimony from all quarters whence evidence can be brought to bear upon the point, that what He claimed to do was done—that the necessity which He alleged was plain to the universal instinct of mankind and the result of His work and mission has been found exactly what He said it would be—there is to any unprejudiced mind a weight of evidence that is overwhelming, and in any other branch of research would be taken as conclusive. A professor states certain laws and facts, and claims certain properties as belonging to the

matters with which he deals. Many of the facts are probably within our own observation—some perhaps beyond our unaided power to ascertain. But when our own observation satisfies us that the facts are correctly stated, and we have it demonstrated with regard to others that we cannot ourselves ascertain that certain results inevitably follow from particular conditions exactly as he states; as, for instance, that passing a current of electricity through a certain mixture will deposit crystals of a particular shape and substance; though we cannot see the electricity, yet if he turns the handle of the machine, and the crystals are formed exactly as he foretold, we are bound as reasonable men to accept his proof as conclusive. So, if we are reasonable men, with the supernatural element of Christianity.

We have as solid facts, established by all human history and experience, the very things which Christ claimed as the conditions of His demonstration to the world: that mankind, left to natural reason and conscience, which had been tried under all possible conditions and in various ways, grew hopelessly and utterly corrupt, and all efforts after civilisation and empire had become worn out, and proved failures in any purpose that we can assign man's existence to, higher than the life of mere animals; and that then He

came to judge and try the world, witnessed to by the voices of prophets who had foretold that He should thus come, with great minuteness of detail, avowedly by the prompting of a supernatural revelation that thus it should be. He fulfilled these predictions exactly as it had been foretold, and especially He demonstrated the verification of laws and forces claiming to be supernatural, of which evidence had been given under special conditions in the history of a selected nation, to whom a divine law and social order had been revealed. There was, as He said there would be on His coming, a time when all the world went through a fire of trial; and it was, as He foretold, that if He was lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him, and make all things new. For it was the fact that when all things belonging Him had an end, and the nations of the old world went into the crucible, a new world was established, a thing of very gradual growth, as He said it would be, but of unmistakable reality, which the instinct of mankind has recognised as the beginning of all true order and progress and civilisation and human development. The facts are unquestionable. The explanation of them which Christ gave is either proved true, by just the same evidence that we accept as conclusive in any matter of

scientific demonstration, or He was a wilful impostor. That is wholly untenable, from all His known acts and character, and any other explanation of the facts is inadequate. The only conclusion is therefore that what He revealed is true: that the spiritual forces which He claimed are established, and He was declared to be the Son of God with power.

Take that whole period of carnage and destruction which began with the burning of Rome (A.D. 64) and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem. View it in all its bearings, in the light of the antecedent causes which led up to it, and the new era which it made possible for humanity, and say what phrases describe it so well as those in which Christ characterised it? It was the "completion of the age"—*συντελέια τοῦ αἰῶνος*—the winding up of all efforts of mankind to civilise and rule by natural reason and instincts all drawn to a head, and therein, after having reached the greatest height of pomp and power, beginning to break up from their inherent corruption; and the winding up simultaneously of the temporary and tribal experiment of the theocracy, which had to give way before the bringing in of a better hope for the world of men. The time was come that judgment should begin at the House of God; and in the

fearful persecution of the Christians that followed on the burning of Rome, their faith was indeed tried so as by fire. Then the trial spread to the great city that sat alone as queen upon the earth, and in the convulsions which followed the death of Nero, the judgment of God searched her whole system through and through, and showed the rottenness of it that ultimately proved her ruin, though it took centuries yet for her vast framework to collapse. And at the very time the judgment of God visited the city that had rejected her Lord, and in the fearful miseries which culminated in the siege of Jerusalem, the fire of trial searched the long results of the theocracy, and those in whom were found but empty chaff and husks it consumed with flame unquenchable, and her house was left unto her desolate. It was a veritable trial of the world by fire, and the only thing that survived the ordeal was the pure metal of a new faith.

For the fire that burnt up the ungodly of the world only served to kindle the light of Christian truth and life, which the blood of many martyrs, so far from quenching, only made to leap up with renewed heat and vigour.

The figure of a "fire of Gehenna," which Christ constantly employed, would speak to the Jews of a great purifying receptacle for all that

was foul and vile and refuse, like the Valley of Hinnom, where purgative fires were kept ever burning to consume the filth and refuse of the holy city. The very point of the allusion lay in the connection of this valley of purifying fires—which, with its lurid flames and rolling smoke, would seem to any one who looked on it at night—fall from the city walls as a very lake of fire—with the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city, which was to be the seat of a kingdom of God, the blessing of all nations in a regenerate world.

For that was the "good news" which Christ came to bring to the world, the establishment of the city and kingdom of God, which should have its purificatory fire of trial, purging out all that was vile and refuse, and refining the pure metal of the earth. Into that fire of trial Jerusalem of old was cast, and all that was corrupt in her perished in it. Into that fire of trial Rome, the Babel of the world, was cast, and long it was that the smoke of her burning went up to heaven, as Huns and Goths and Vandals flung themselves on her, and ravaged her with fire and sword, in devastating swarms like locusts, that seemed to arise in endless hordes, as from a bottomless abyss. And so the Christian world went through that fire of trial in the early persecutions, and survived it, and came out pure metal, from which

have been gradually built the walls of the holy city of Christendom that is filling the earth. And each modern nation or people that has been successively built into that holy city has had that fire of trial to pass through at some stage of its course; and just as it has come out refined and purified, has it been built up into that great dominion of spiritual truth and righteousness, in the light of which now walk the nations of them that are saved; and in all the civilising world the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it, and hail it as the true blessing of all nations.

For we must mark how all the words which are distinctive of the great design of Revelation continually recur to the very last pages. All these minute correspondences, or "homologies" in physiological language, are links which bind the various parts of Revelation into one scheme from beginning to end, so clearly shown that it only needs to be lightly touched at times to remind us of it.

There is the same purpose stated: that mankind should be the sons of God, and have dominion over the world for and under Him. There is the same law declared: that in living by the will of God there is life for men, and without it, or in opposition to it, spiritual death.

That law is stated more clearly and shown by a living example of the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased, moving in the actual circumstances of daily life. A higher motive and wider consequences are revealed in the future existence declared to be dependent upon man's life here, of which a strict account should have to be given in a judgment after the dissolution of the body. There is the force revealed, as the power of that higher life that is in man, which no other embodied creature shares—the power of the Spirit which breathed into man makes him a living soul, conformed to the image of God, imparted to all those who are called to be the sons of God in fuller measure and greater perfection. There is the pledge of a far higher and more sacred assurance, the ratification of a new covenant, established upon better promises than any that had gone before, in the blood of Christ Himself, the Mediator whose own atoning death sealed the promise of eternal forgiveness and redemption to His people. And there is the like result foretold, on a far larger scale, even as the lightnings of the sky produce results greater than the electricity of the laboratory, yet are the same force and work by the same law—that they who accept the divine call and enter into that covenant, ruled by that law and ani-

mated by that force, should have dominion over the earth; should regenerate the world, restore fallen humanity, and establish the true kingdom of God, in which all nations of the earth should be blessed.

From many writers of the Christian era, sacred or profane, we have concurrent testimony to the existence of a widespread belief among the nations of the East that some should go forth from Judæa and make themselves masters of the world: *Egressi Judæa rerum potirentur.* This belief was especially strong among the Jews themselves, in whom it had been fostered by the predictions of their sacred writings, and was doubtless at the root of many of the insurrections by which they brought on them their final doom. Tacitus, Josephus, and others appropriated it to Vespasian, who left the campaign in Syria to mount the throne of the Cæsars. History, the inexorable logic of events, has disproved the application to Vespasian or Titus as ruthlessly as she demolished the claims of John of Gischala, or Theudas, or Barcochebas. But the expectation and the prediction were plainly before the people, and generally entertained by them.

Christ fearlessly claimed the application of them to his own followers—a pretension which

would seem utterly absurd to any who might hear it, in comparison with the probabilities of its fulfilment in other quarters.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." A singular presumption for a carpenter of an obscure provincial town to speak such words to a little knot of Galilean peasants! But all history has verified it, with as exact logic of events as has disproved any other application. Rome was the acknowledged mistress of the world, and at the zenith of power; Jerusalem was oppressed and derided, and sinking into irretrievable disaster; the speaker was rejected even by His own countrymen, and nailed to a felon's gibbet. Yet He had but to light up the fire of judgment that was piled to try the nations, and the empress city came out of the crucible only scum and dross, while the new faith and life that He brought to the world was found pure metal, of which was built, on the foundations of those Twelve to whom He spake the words, the holy city, the heavenly kingdom of truth and righteousness, which has asserted its dominion over the civilised world, that is being gradually regenerate through her.

Egressi Judæa rerum potiti sunt. To the little flock that hung upon Christ's words in

Galilee, now has been made manifest the Father's good pleasure to give the kingdom. And so in Christendom again we have the experimental verification of a revelation—a law asserted, the conditions made clear, and the result foretold. As in the former instance on the smaller scale of the theocracy, the whole course and progress of the world thenceforth are challenged in evidence of the scientific truth of the law declared and of the force revealed.

For the main object of His mission was not destructive, but constructive—to save life, not to destroy. He was sent into the world, not to condemn the world—though the first and most apparent consequence of the crisis through which the world then passed was the condemnation of a sinful and adulterous generation of the chosen people, and a corrupt age among the dominant nations of the earth;—"but that the world through Him might be saved."

This was done by the development of the same divine design which had been revealed from the first, and had been working through many ages before He came to expand it into its last stage—the manifestation of a holy city and kingdom of God—a divine order and rule, of which the theocracy had been a partial and temporary instalment, but which now was to be revealed

and made possible for the regeneration of all human life—the true desire of nations.

The challenge was thus again thrown down, and the subsequent history of the world has been the answer to it. The one distinctly prophetical book of the later Scriptures serves the same purpose as the books of the older prophets—to demonstrate beforehand the witness of God in history, so that when the actual demonstration is complete, it may be claimed as establishing the truths revealed. One by one in the Apocalypse the threads are picked up which make the pattern of the declared design. The Son of God is shown going forth conquering and to conquer, with war, pestilence, and famine following in His train to complete His victory over the sin of the world—forming the fiery trial which should destroy the corruption of the age, and make His kingdom possible upon earth; and the swarms of devastating tribes that poured from Scythian darkness to torment the debased civilisation and empires of the old world, and to make new nations who should rule over the earth, when informed and purified themselves by the light and life of Christianity. It was foreshown how Babel, the old world city, or civilisation, and the wild beasts or godless despotisms, in which men's natural instincts of social order and rule result, should

all be consumed as by fire, and the true hope of the world manifested from heaven in a perfect civilisation and government according to the law and will of God. All this was plainly foreshown, with constant reference to the notes of the main theme of revelation. Even as physical science, having shown the law and force of electricity in the laboratory, may appeal to the same force, working by the same law, on a far grander scale in the thunderstorm, and every instance of that force when set in motion according to that law verifies the truth of electrical science, so the whole course of Christendom and the world is the verification of revealed truth on which it professedly relies. For "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

How far the new leaven of Christian truth when introduced into the nations did itself contribute to the downfall of the old world—what share in bringing about that catastrophe was due to the new hatred of sin and impatience of misrule which Christianity breathed into the thousands who accepted its aspirations after a higher life and expectation of a new divine order in the world—this can hardly be shown. And to enter into the question would involve the deeper speculation, how far the inner torment of souls awakened to the consciousness of higher life,

and vexed at the sins of fallen human nature, forms part of the fire of purgation through which all have to be refined before they can find a place in the holy city.

But there can be no question that whatever new life, new light, new order, distinguish the new world from the old, are due to Christianity as the informing power in the world since the death of Christ; that Christendom has been and still is gradually asserting itself as the ruling power in the world; and by the incorporation of the laws of God into the laws of modern Christian nations, the kingdoms of this world have been and are becoming the kingdoms of God and of His Christ. And thus the world, even while it fights against Christian teaching, may itself be called in evidence for the truth of Christianity, just as atheistic writers of a former school, like Byron and Shelley, while inveighing against the teaching of the Bible, were in fact supplying signal proofs of some of the most fundamental truths which the Bible alone accurately states or adequately explains, namely, the utter hollowness and vast failure of human life in all its phases, except when ruled by the law of God and animated by His Spirit. The better progress of historical science in late years has made infidelity shift its ground materially

from the flat denial of scriptural truth which was current in the beginning of this century. By the more true principles of historic criticism which now obtain, men cannot toss the whole away as a myth. There is the same foundation in evidence for scriptural facts as there is for any other early historical facts; and recent researches are yearly discovering fresh witness to the facts on which revelation relies, which are of the utmost value. And as by far the greater proportion of the grounds on which Christianity demands our assent are historical facts, that is a great point gained against modern unbelief; which, as it cannot deny the facts of history, and cannot go the length of saying that for the rest of His revelation, which is not historical but supernatural, Jesus of Nazareth, whom they admit to have been the purest teacher and noblest character that the world has seen, was a deliberate impostor, is reduced to the hypothesis that the supernatural in His revelation was a mere pious dream.

The events of the world, which historical science is rapidly storing and tabulating, will soon show if this is tenable. If that does not come to pass which Christ said would come to pass, as the result of His mission to the world, perhaps we may have to admit that it was a

dream. As if it could be shown that when you turn the handle of an electrical machine, the proper conditions and a conductor being present, and after an adequate trial no flash of electricity is found to follow, then we might claim to have demonstrated that electricity was a scientific dream. If, on the contrary, whenever the conditions are present and a conductor is applied, the flash invariably follows, though we know nothing as to whence it comes or what it is. nevertheless the truth of electrical force and law is demonstrated to every reasonable man. So, we may claim, is demonstrated the truth of Christianity.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LIFE OF THE WORLD TO COME.

Now, is all this true, or is it not true? In the great failure of humanity, which all experience confesses, is the fact apparent or not that just so far as men do live to the declared will and law of God, so they approach to the divine, and realise the highest, best life and purest happiness that humanity is capable of; and according as they fall away from or violate that law and will, so they are the prey of vile affections and hateful lusts, and the corruption that is in the world through lust makes the life of men a chaos and a wreck? Amid that general chaos and wreck of human life is it the fact or is it not that the highest and best life ever known has been the Christian ideal, so that if that ideal could be made wholly true for all humanity, the world would be regenerate to new life, and the sin of the world would be taken away? Is the fact being proved by the progress of the world that the only power which has ever been

able to do anything towards regenerating human nature and saving the world from its inherent corruption, has been the faith and the Spirit of Christ, the force revealed by Him that can alone make possible the fulfilment of the law of God? Is it or is it not true that Christianity, the little seed of divine teaching, less than all seeds of earth, the simple message of revealed truth that stands in striking contrast to the pretentious systems of human philosophy, has developed into a power with which nothing else can compare —overshadowing human life till even those who are least conscious of it own its influence shaping their thoughts and lives? Is it a fact that Christendom is rapidly becoming the dominant power in the earth, so that by its introduction of the laws of God into the systems of modern states, the kingdoms of the world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ?

It cannot be said that this is due to any natural civilisation or natural religion. Men's civilising instincts had their full trial, and proved to end only in refinement of self-indulgence, the reign of brute force or craft. Natural religion had its trial, and was proved to end in superstitious rites of worship and fanatical fears of the unknown, without any ameliorating effect upon the lives of men. Natural reason had its trial, and was found

inadequate to restrain the lawless instincts and baser passions of the natural man, just for want of the higher force which Christianity revealed as the one thing needed to regenerate mankind. That force is indeed revealed as something different in kind from any motive or influence that by nature actuate mankind, being professedly supernatural, a communication from a spiritual world that is unseen.

But no "enthusiasm of humanity" has ever done what the personal devotion to a living Lord has enabled Christians to do. No sense of patriotism, no enlightened self-interest that sees our own highest advantage in the welfare of others, has ever done a tithe of what the self-sacrifice of the spirit of Jesus has enabled His followers to do for the amelioration of mankind. Not even the purest and most chastened self-indulgence of the most refined natural man has escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, like the spirit of self-denial which is the law of Christ. The contrast, which might be carried as far as the failure of humanity reaches, and the law of Christ strives to redeem it from the bondage and save it from the curse of sin, proves incontestably that supernatural force is needed, and is only supplied by the Spirit of God brought within reach by Christianity.

We may say more; that if at times men have been able to attain by their own sense of obligation and sentiment of worship to some dim perception of a Higher Being, and the desire to apprehend and propitiate it—feeling after God if haply they might find Him, by the half light of reason and conscience—it must be remembered that religion has ere now disgraced humanity by some of the vilest crimes.

If a Plato or a Socrates might grasp some idea of truth, or a Buddha think out a pure self-abnegating faith, they were found to fail in exactly that which Christianity professes to reveal—authority sufficient to prevent doubt and fear, and a motive and force able to keep men to the ideal set before them. Religion may be admitted to be an instinct of humanity, and it would be strange indeed if in its manifold phases it never had been found to approximate to truth.

But religion has had to be credited with some of the worst crimes that have disgraced humanity, from the infants that were made to pass through the fire to Moloch, to the holocausts of Dahomey and the dark rites of human sacrifice of the Druids. Alas! that we should have to add, to the atrocities practised in the name of Christianity by the Inquisition, and not by that alone. But

these have been clearly done in opposition to Christianity rather than in obedience to it, by those who knew not what spirit they were of. And as we have shown that a law is verified even by those who fail to live up to it, by the results following upon the conditions as foretold, so the results of a false or misread Christianity, which may be read plainly in the lessons of Christendom, are additional proofs of the true law of Christ, as illustrated in the records of what Christianity has done for men.

The radical difference between Christianity and other religions is that the aim which it sets before it is not the stimulating a sense of fear and scruples of conscience, nor the mere sentiment of worship alone; but a new life, revealed as the only perfect life of earth, in communion with the unseen life of a higher and spiritual world, by actual communication of the Spirit of God. This is made possible by the higher faculties with which mankind were professedly endowed from the first, the breath (or spirit) of life implanted in man, which created him in the likeness or image of God, and made possible the gift which Christ declared. There is the further motive revealed, in the endlessness of that life of the Spirit, for that an eternity of bliss in a spiritual world is in store for those who live to the Spirit

and overcome the sin of the world, of which the declared result is spiritual death.

This certainty of a final retribution, in which the righteous Judge of all the earth, whose are all souls, shall reward every man in perfect equity according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil, with a reward of glory and honour and immortality to every man that worketh good, and indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil—this is the only motive that has ever proved strong enough to enable men to overcome the corruption that is in the world through lust, and the motions of sin which are in their members. But this must be felt to be something very different from the weird imaginings with which the pagan conscience has tortured itself, or the gloomy fatalism that views mankind as wholly doomed to endless torture, with the exception of some few arbitrarily selected, without reference to their lives, for rapture and indiscriminate felicity.

From those horrible material imaginings of the guilty consciousness of a sin-laden world, it was a declared object of the Christian revelation to set us free; for these were the very fears of death that formed the bondage of human souls, from which Christ gave Himself that He might deliver us. In the stupendous self-sacrifice of His death

we have the only expiation that guilty and fearful consciences can look to as absolving the penitent from guilt, and purging the conscience from lifeless acts of atonement, such as men naturally cling to, to serve the living God. Even that has not always sufficed to set the conscience free from gloomy superstitious fears, that hang like a black pall over human life. But if that does not, there certainly is no other expiation that can set the conscience free. The sense that that great act of self-sacrifice has been offered for the sin of the world, and pardon and peace ratified to the people of Christ by that blood of the everlasting covenant, is assuredly the only thing the world has ever known that has at all dissipated the awful fears with which men's instinctive sense of sin has invested the possibilities of the future. And the central point of the world's history, which made thenceforth all things new, was the sacrifice which dissipated superstitious terrors, and bade the world live to serve God with reverence and godly fear, according to His own good and acceptable and perfect will, in the liberty with which Christ hath set us free.

And of that future life which is revealed, although we have no absolute proof to offer to the living, for the only absolute proof is to be got by living into it through the death of the

body, yet there is as much proof given as is possible from the nature of the case, and that in a way that we should deem conclusive on any other subject.

The instinct of humanity tells each living man —*non omnis moriar*—"I shall not wholly die." We know we have that within us of which the death of the body is not the end. We have as the very central truth which the chosen witnesses of Christianity especially insist on, the evidence on which their whole teaching turns, that Christ did die and did actually rise again from the dead. If that cardinal article of our faith be true, then there is a resurrection from the dead and a world to come; and the only question that remains open is as to who shall be counted worthy to attain to it. We see a gradual development from lower to higher forms of life—one eternal process moving on, by which higher and higher faculties are developed in successive organisms, and a gradual evolution of higher powers in those highest organisms to the very hour of death, in which the soul, in any true saint, shows brightest. Are we then to believe in the sudden and absolute reversal of all laws of evolution, and the abrogation of any design in existence—that those highest faculties are capable of no further development, and the

whole course of nature falls shattered in blank annihilation? The teaching of revelation on this head is most singularly corroborated by the conclusions of science and the experience of mankind alike. The world of moral agents is shown to be subject to exactly the same law as all physical types—namely, the extinction of those who are proved unfit, the survival and development of those who prove themselves most fit for the purpose of their existence by a process of trial and selection; for the "election" revealed and often insisted upon as a law of the spiritual world is not only compatible with but closely analogous to the law of "selection," which science relies upon as governing and developing the natural world.

"Election," as a Christian doctrine, has been so interwoven with the Calvinistic controversy in popular theology, that the very word seems to connote the whole fatalistic scheme of Calvin to our minds. But substitute "selection" in all the sentences where ἐκλόγη occurs—quite as good a rendering, as every student knows—and not only does the Calvinistic creed vanish, but the very truth which physiologists claim as the great triumph of modern science to have extracted "from scarped cliff and quarried stone," is found to be the great burden of all revelation

in the moral and spiritual world. And the analogy is proof almost irresistible that the natural and the spiritual worlds are all of a piece—the work of one creative mind, which, as the Psalmist taught mankind centuries before a Darwin or a Spencer lived to think it out for themselves, has given unto all "a law which shall not be broken."

We have revealed the creation of a race, with special faculties to fulfil a declared purpose, as intelligent agents of the Creator—its perpetuation provided for—a law of the moral world declared, and a spiritual force revealed. In no case is any natural truth contradicted, but the observed facts of human existence are shown to be explained by a higher law and force than any we have faculties to ascertain, and which are therefore to us supernatural. But these forces are shown to be ruled by exactly similar laws to those which determine the observed uniformity of natural causes and effects. And a similar proof is given to that on which we rely to establish any scientific truth — namely, when the law is declared and the force revealed the result is shown to follow exactly according to the conditions, whether naturally or artificially present.

The world at large proves to us that where

that force is weak, and the law violated, man's guidance being left to his own reason and conscience, the result is the wreck of human life, when tested in the fire of divine trial.

The theocracy supplies another experiment. The law revealed, and a race selected and set apart under artificial conditions to test it and themselves. It is conclusively shown that as they live up to it, it is the source of life and welfare to them; as they break it or fall short of it, there is decay and misery.

Through this is seen a growth and training to a larger experiment and wider fulfilment of the divine purpose. The law more fully declared, with nobler motive and higher sanction; a wider selection of agents with whom a new covenant is established on better promises; a greater measure of the force manifested, and victory assured to them in the kingdom of God. The verification of this is being worked out by Christendom. But the verification proves a much wider ulterior truth, with regard to the promise not only of the life that now is, but also of that which is to come.

Christianity asserts the existence of a future world, of which it states the conditions and laws. The absolute proof is only to be reached by living into it. But it also asserts a kindred

spiritual life in this world, of which it states the conditions and the laws to be the same, only in a different stage of development; which from all analogies of nature may probably be a matter of development, as it certainly is revealed to be a matter of selection and survival of the fittest. Now if heaven, the future state of disembodied spirits, is beyond actual proof, the kingdom of heaven, the present realm of spirits yet embodied, is a matter capable of the most direct, positive, and tangible proof. And in proof of its reality, its conditions and laws, Christianity does not hesitate to appeal to the whole experience of the world. Doubtless this is one reason why this divine scheme of a kingdom of heaven upon earth is insisted upon with so much earnestness, as an aid to our faith, and pledge of a perfect kingdom hereafter. But not the only reason; for revelation certainly sets forth this life as real and earnest, and no empty dream, in striking contrast to the visionary abnegation of the life that now is, which many have indulged in, misled by the confusion that has crept into modern notions between the age and the world, the *αἰών* and the *κόσμος*. On the contrary, this divine scheme of a kingdom of heaven upon earth is dwelt upon as a glorious and blessed consummation,

for which the labours and the struggles and the prayers of God's people in all time may well be spent. And has not the course of the world shown it to be so?

What is the great want of human nature? It is that which was felt in the days of Abraham, and in all ages before or since—the need of a perfect social life — an order which shall secure the greatest welfare and happiness of all in mutual duties, joint interests, and common hopes. We cannot ever be mere isolated units in the world of men. Our happiness and well-being are so inextricably twined and interlaced, our joys and sorrows, our private interests and common progress toward the greater good of each and all so mutually interdependent, that no one liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself; but if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it—if one member rejoice, all the members may rejoice together.

Man makes or mars the happiness and goodness of his fellow-men. And as we look around the world, we seem to see, like David, that all the foundations of the world are out of course, sin and self-interest marring all the order and progress of mankind. We see a great striving and yearning in the heart of man for some perfect social order, that grows stronger as knowledge

increasing enables men to see more and more clearly what might be, and in what a contrast it stands to what is;—a great upheaving and mighty stirring, each knot of men fancying that they have some panacea for the ills of mankind, and forcing it on their fellows. And through all this social disturbance we see two things gradually but clearly shaping themselves, —that the failure of human efforts after happiness and progress just depends on their not being subject to the divine order; and what human nature needs is a divine order, a perfect law, and there is no perfect law but the law of God.

While in all the struggles and failures and crimes of social strivings we see that order is being gradually evolved out of confusion, liberty and light taking the place of oppression and ignorance, just so far as the leaven of the kingdom of God is permeating the mass of human social life and assimilating it unto itself. And slowly, with steps so gradually progressive that each is almost imperceptible, the kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. The one cure for the disorder of the sick world, sick of its own evil and error and misgovernment, is to be found

in the full establishment of the true theocracy the personal rule of God in the hearts of His own people, and through them over the whole world, governing them in a divine order of perfect social happiness and mutual good, of which Abraham's faith was a vision, and Moses' law a foreshadowing; even that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

And is not that indeed the true "desire of nations," for which all humanity is yearning? What else can satisfy the great wants of human social life, or supply all the varied objects for which mankind is striving in vain? Are you a lover of imperialism? What rule can be so absolute as His, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords? Are you a constitutionalist? Then where can you seek such a perfect harmonisation of rights as in the reign of the righteous Judge of all the earth, summing up in Himself the loyalty and interest of all classes —the one fount of honour and centre of veneration, the embodiment of perfect equity, by which He rewards every man according to his works? Are you a democrat? And where can any pure commonwealth be found save in the people of God, ruling their common life by His laws within themselves, in perfect equality in

His sight, who is no respecter of persons? Or are you communist or socialist? Where can such dreams be realised save in the community of interests by which all who are Christ's are bound to prefer each the other's good, in one universal brotherhood of mutual helpfulness? each member filling up that which is behind of the sufferings and self-sacrifice of Christ, for His body's sake which is the Church, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all.

What liberty is to be compared with that wherewith Christ hath set us free? Where are true equality or fraternity to be found save in the membership of the one family of God, in which the very Son of God is the first-born, and all we are brethren? In short, can we not see that all the common objects for which men strive and weary themselves — religion, politics, social progress, civilisation — are but shadowy views from different aspects of the one great reality, in which alone the needs and aspirations of mankind can find shape and substance, "the Kingdom of God"?

And if Christianity is thus proved to be the only true philosophy of life, so far as we can verify it, the one science that is found to harmonise all the phenomena of man's higher nature

which come within our observation and experience, are we not bound to accept it when it teaches of other phases and developments of man's life which are as yet beyond our observation, and of which therefore our faculties can ascertain nothing, save so far as may be revealed on the witness of those who have been admitted "behind the veil"? The phenomena of life present the most subtle mysteries that can engage the thoughts of man, yet of the most real and deep interest. It is a force acting on matter that we see and feel, of which, except as it acts on that matter of which we are made, we can know nothing, so ethereal and impalpable is it, though so terribly real.

That life is a mere modification or appanage of matter is almost self-evidently untrue, else how is it that a man is a living organism one minute, and the next, without perceptible molecular alteration, a dead body? It is a most subtle force, which we can perceive only through its action upon matter, but most real. Do not all observed phenomena point to the conclusion that it is independent of the material world, and must therefore be presumed in its higher developments to have a separate existence of its own, in a world or order of which our

faculties as yet have no cognisance? But as the laws of that higher life have been revealed on credible evidence, and shown to be such as harmonise with all experience so far as we can trace and test its working, are we not bound as reasonable men to accept the evidence as to those further phases of life, which are declared to be possible for the future without dependence upon matter, such as our bodies are made of here, at all?

We see that all things come to an end. Each organism has its day, and when it reaches a certain point, ceases to be. Each type has its day, and gives way to higher types that are developed out of it, by a universal process of selection in the natural world, and by the purpose of God according to a kindred election in the spiritual world. This whole order of the universe that we now see will have its day and cease to be. Science and revelation are at one in teaching that there will be a time when this earth shall follow the course of other planetary bodies, and become untenable by life, as now organised, when "there shall be no more sea;" and a further day when the very existence of this planet, possibly the whole planetary system, shall come to an end, when the force and heat

that now sustain that system being expended, and gravitation prevailing over centrifugal force, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

But is it not wholly contrary to all known analogies of nature to assume that life has an end where our faculties cease to trace it? Is it not rather clear that that impalpable force will have existence long after the matter on which it now acts shall have been resolved into its primary elements? If so, are we not bound to accept the revelation of the only law of life that is found to harmonise all the phenomena that we are able to observe, when it asserts what as yet is beyond observation?—that the highest form of life manifested in the material world, the higher life of the highest living organisms, is capable of an independent existence, over which the decay of this molecular structureof man's body, the χοῦς ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς of which his material frame is made, shall have no power, which shall be endless in a future world?

That higher life is declared to be subject to strict and uniform laws, revealed by message

from the unseen Power who made the force and ordained its laws, which have been verified with absolute fidelity by all subsequent experience and observation of mankind. As wilful violation of those laws entails decay and ultimate spiritual death, so that if we live after the flesh we shall die, so the law of the spirit of life in Christ has made us free from the law of sin and of death Thus amid all the judgment and trial that are as surely going on in the spiritual world as in the material, ceaselessly condemning all types that are unfit, and selecting and developing those that are most fit for the purposes of their existence, which will go on beyond this present physical order into the great day of the future, there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit. So that, though our perfect spiritual life is now hid with Christ in God, yet when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. This is indeed the concurrent testimony alike of reason and revelation—the great conclusion to which science and theology lead up. It is witnessed to by the instinct and conscience of mankind, dimly groping after truth in the twilight of natural sense and reason, while it is borne out

by the evidence of all analogies of nature and the testimony of the long course of history and experience. And this too is the witness of God, that He hath testified concerning His Son—that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

APPENDIX.

"THE END OF THE AGE."

In our study of the usage of the word *αἰὼν* in the New Testament there is one very significant and expressive phrase which deserves special mention by itself—the phrase *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*. It is a phrase by which Christ marks the culminating point of the establishment of His kingdom, in the important series of similitudes by which the working of that kingdom is made known to us. It is compared, from various aspects, to the growth and ripening of natural processes, as of a seed into the ripe ear yielding fruit. The culminating point is reached when the harvest of this growth is matured. And then, he says, the harvest is the *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* (Matt. xiii. 39, 40, 49), when the Son of Man shall send forth His angels or messengers, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all offences, and those that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.

We translate this phrase "the end of the world," of which it is enough to say that *συντέλεια* means much more than "end"—it is a consummation or winding up, not simply a coming to an end. And *αἰὼν* does not mean "world" at all in our sense of the word, which refers to the *κόσμος* or visible order of the universe. We

have read these expressions so often that we take it for granted that they mean "the end of the world," when this visible universe shall have run its course. There is nothing to show that Christ or His disciples had such a meaning in their minds when He spoke and they listened to the discourse that told of the *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*.

Suppose that we read it as it was written, "the completion, or winding up, of the age." Is there any other light to be thrown on it from other passages to show what He had in mind? There are but two other passages in which the exact phrase occurs, but both of them are significant.

When He foretold the downfall of Jerusalem the disciples gathered round Him and asked—"Tell us, when shall these things be? and what the sign of Thy presence and the completion of the age—*τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*?" The passage that follows has been a problem of the greatest difficulty to commentators; but simply because they have come to it with minds prepossessed with the idea that Christ's words foretold "the end of the *world*." And by trying to make the same expressions cover things so widely distinct as the downfall of Jerusalem and the end of the world, they have involved themselves, and all the question of the coming of Christ's kingdom, in almost inextricable difficulties. If only they would be content to take the words as expressing what they literally and grammatically mean, there would not be any difficulty about it. For they would be seen to refer to the downfall of Jerusalem, the signs of which were predicted with such remarkable fidelity, that the early Christians by observing them were enabled to time their memorable flight to Pella, so as to escape without the

loss of a single life in the massacres and nameless horrors of that fearful siege. And the phrase tells us that that event was a coming of Christ in judgment—it was the completion of that age of the world's history that then culminated and came to an end—it was the *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*.

There is but one other occasion where we meet with that exact phrase: when before His ascension, Christ, having given charge to the Apostles, sent them forth to announce the gospel of His kingdom to all nations, and gave the promise, "Lo, I am with you all the days unto the completion of the age—*ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος*." Is it not fair to conclude that these phrases all refer to the same epoch which He identified so distinctly with the downfall of Jerusalem, the ending of the old dispensation; and that this last was a personal promise that He would be with His chosen Twelve personally to sustain and animate them in the special work to which He sent them forth: to announce the news of His coming kingdom, which within the compass of their personal lives they did carry to all known nations of the civilised world? Then, at the close, when their personal work was done, and they could claim that their sound had gone out unto all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world, the last and chief of them yielded up their lives under the Neronian persecution—the last, save John alone, of whom Christ had intimated that he might tarry till His coming, and who alone of the Twelve *did* live past the downfall of Jerusalem. Then the revolt of the Jews against Cestius Gallus broke out, and after the slow miseries of the siege under Titus the end came. The Holy City which was the centre of all

the institutions of Judaism, and round which clustered all the aspirations and associations of the theocracy, was sacked and razed; and the new era of Christianity was fairly established in the world's history.

But though these are the only occasions on which the exact expression, used by Christ Himself, occurs, there are others so nearly akin that they must be brought in comparison to elucidate them. There is one very nearly identical (Heb. ix. 26), *ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων*, "at the completion of the ages" (plural), which is remarkable as speaking of other cycles or ages (elsewhere spoken of in the plural also) as coming together to their consummation. And when? At Christ's coming to the world. "For now once at the consummation of the ages *hath He been manifested*, to the putting away of sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

There can be no question of the date here specified. And there are two other very similar expressions to be noted. St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 11) speaks of the historical records of God's people having been written for our admonition "upon whom the ends of the ages (*τὰ τέλη τῶν αἰώνων*) have come" (*κατήντηκεν*, a finished act). And St. Peter (1 Pet. iv. 7) says "the end of all has drawn near (*ἤγγικε*)"—an expression very fitly applied to the downfall of Jerusalem and the end of the dispensation of which it was the centre, but not at all applicable to the end of the *world* in our phrase. But it is a very remarkable thing that the words *τέλος* or *συντέλεια* never once occur throughout the whole range of the New Testament in connection with the word *κόσμος*. Whenever they are made explicit, they refer to the end of the *αἰὼν* or age, *never* to that of the *κόσμος*; and the only fair

conclusion is, that if we do translate the saying, "the end of the world," it must be in the sense that regards the era before Christ as the old world, and the era after Christ the new world; but not in reference to the end of this visible universe as it is generally taken. There is indeed one expression (Eph. ii. 2) in which the apostle couples the two words together, when speaking of the abominations of heathen life which characterised the age that Christian light and truth were to make new—the transgressions and sins in which the heathen converts once walked, as matter of daily life in those times of iniquity—*κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*—"according to the age of this world." It would have been almost too palpably absurd for our translators to have rendered both the Greek words by one English one, as they generally did, and to speak of the Ephesians as walking in iniquities "after the *world* of this world." And still more absurd to have rendered it, "after the *eternity* of this world," according to the sense that *αἰὼν* has since gathered round itself. So they have rendered the phrase "according to the course of this world," which gives a fair approximation to the meaning. Were it not for the insane desire for bewilderment that seems to pass over usually sound intellects when they come near the word *αἰὼν*, it might have seemed just as easy to give the plain meaning which belongs to the word, and translated it here, as it always ought to be translated, and nothing else, simply age.

For that "age of the world," the *αἰὼν τοὺ κόσμου*, was grossly and horribly corrupt and utterly rotten—heathen life was steeped in transgressions and sins to a depth of vileness that we can hardly now conceive.

Every law of God was set at defiance. The natural religion of mankind, by which, in the early days of their civilisation, they did show the law of God written in their hearts, in some sense of right and wrong, some apprehension of a Supreme Being, had had its full trial, and from the highest to the lowest had proved a failure. The philosophy and worship of the learned and the devout had led to no adequate influence over the world to keep it from the corruption and decay inherent in human passions, and the world by wisdom knew not God. The mass of mankind had sunk lower and lower in the depths of superstition and the corruption that is in the world through lust; and because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, after the simple patriarchal faith that seems to have been common to all the early families of civilising man, He gave them up to a reprobate mind to do those things which are unseemly and foul and vile, and to work all uncleanness with greediness. And the chosen race, turning the law revealed into a mere matter of superstitious scruple, petty formalism, and party rancour, through breaking the law dishonoured God, until the name of God was blasphemed among the heathen through them.

The *αἰὼν τοῦ κόσμου* — the age of the world — was steeped in transgressions and iniquities, and its end was at hand. It was more than amere *τέλος* or ending—it was a *συντέλεια*, or consummation. In the heathen world, among all civilising peoples, we see a gradual and steady working out of a development, and a period of trial. The magnificence of the old world empires, the philosophy and art of the Greeks, the wonderful organising power of the Romans—all had worked out their pro-

blems of the world's government, had each melted into the other, and paid their contribution to succeeding systems and generations. These all were gathered to a head in the great Roman world-wide empire, which devoured all the others, and reached its greatest pitch and highest development in the age from Augustus to Vespasian, which began with the birth of Christ and ended in the flames of *Hierosolyma Capta*. The theocracy had had its day and played its part, and now in the fulness of time had to give way to the dispensation of Him who came to fulfil the law and the prophets in His own kingdom. The establishment of that was the *συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων*—the consummation of all foregoing ages and cycles. When He was manifested, to whom all the course of the world had led up in silent preparation, it was for judgment that He came into the world. And as the AGE was hopelessly corrupt, He condemned it to a fiery purgation; but it was not to condemn the WORLD, but that the world through Him might be saved. It is a remarkable and significant thing that St. John never uses the term *αἰὼν* in his writings except twice in the sense of indefinite futurity (*εἰς τὸν ἀιῶνα*), and in the Apocalypse always in the plural. Why? Is it not because the *αἰὼν* of which the other apostles and his Master so often spoke had passed away before he wrote, and to use the expression as applicable to the world after the fall of Jerusalem would have been misleading? So he spoke of the *κόσμος*, or world, which with its dangers and deceits was still present; but he spoke not of the *αἰὼν* which his Master came to condemn, because ere he wrote it was a thing of the past. Christ had given Himself to deliver

His own people "out of that then present evil world" (ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος πονηροῦ, Gal. i. 4), and to have spoken of it as then present after its τέλος or end had been reached would have but been misleading.

Be it distinctly understood that we would not for one moment deny that this κόσμος will have its end, which is indeed clearly indicated, or that we are now living in an αἰὼν or age which will run its appointed course and have its end also. And by the universal law of uniformity of forces in God's world, the end of this present age will probably be in a fire of trial, a judgment when the Son of Man shall come to take account with it, to gather its fruits again into His garner, and burn up the chaff and refuse with fire unquenchable.

That seems incontestably clear from the teaching of Revelation for the future, and from the analogy of experience in the past. But what we do insist upon as absolutely necessary for the right understanding of Christ's teaching is that αἰὼν means age and not world; and that what He plainly declared Himself to come into the world for was to condemn the age and to save the world.

And it is most instructive to notice how the period that began with the birth of Christ, and ended in the flames of Jerusalem, was the critical epoch in the world's history—the turning-point that marks off the old world from the new, as clearly as the deluge marked that old world from one yet older.

At the birth of Christ, towards the close of the Augustan age, Rome was mistress of the world, and all the progress of mankind in art and civilisation was gathered up into one head in her.

Within a few months of the date when Christ was first

manifested in the Temple as the Son of God, learning to be about His Father's business, the first great blow was struck against the all-devouring dominion of Rome, in the great victory of Arminius over Varus (A.D. 9). That defeat of the once all-conquering legions in the Hercynian forest for ever established the independence of the Teutonic ancestors of modern nations. It was one of the great crises of times past by which the characteristics of the present were determined. But for it our Germanic ancestors would have been enslaved or exterminated in their native forests and swamps along the Eyder and the Elbe—the power of Rome would have been unbroken, and the whole Western world would have sunk with it into the abyss of its own corruption, to be devastated possibly by the irruption of Mongol hordes, and reduced to hopeless barbarism.

Augustus died a broken old man, beating his head against the wall, and crying, "Varus, Varus, give me back my legions." For the victory of Arminius did more than defeat one of Rome's generals: it revealed one growing source of Italy's decay, in the draft of the best and strongest of her sons on military service, which went far to degenerate the race. "There was great alarm felt lest the conquering Germans should push on against Italy and Rome, and there remained no Roman youth fit for military duty that were worth speaking of; and the allied populations that were at all serviceable had been wasted away."

Fortunately for the world—for the times were not ripe for the bringing forth of the Teutonic nations from their seclusion—Arminius did not press on. In a few years Germanicus repressed the German tribes, introduced arts

of civilisation among them, and laid the foundation of the conquering raids of the Vikings of after days (who founded the nations of the modern world), by teaching them how to build boats and practise the art of navigation. Claudius commenced the systematic subjugation of Britain, and brought within the compass of civilisation the island where the flower of the Teutonic tribes were to find a home, untouched by the vices of later Latin corruption, and where Apostolic Christianity was to be preserved in its purest form. Then after the Neronian persecution, when the cup of iniquity, both of Rome and Jerusalem, was full, the apostles' personal labours over—the gospel of the kingdom preached to all the nations of the known world, "even to the bounds of the West"—the greatest of them, Peter and Paul, sealed their faith by martyrdom, and the fiat for vengeance went forth against the cities whose doom was sealed.

That the capture of Jerusalem and the awful horrors of the siege that preceded it were the downfall of Judaism is generally admitted, though perhaps the effect of that upon the spreading growth of Christianity is not always fully seen. But it is seldom noticed how strikingly the real turning-point of the fortunes of the other great city of the world, Rome, coincided with the last days of Jerusalem. It was in the last year of Nero's life that the growing turbulence of the Jews burst out irrepressibly under the oppressions of Florus; and the beginning of that time of tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, must be dated from the outbreak which Cestius Gallus at first failed to repress, and which occasioned the mission of Vespasian with his conquering army, which under Titus subsequently

rested not until they had reduced the Holy City to a mass of ruin.

Those eventful years sealed the fate of Rome as well as of Jerusalem. The establishment of a military empire, which crushed out all independence from the republic that had conquered the world, carried with it the seeds of its own inevitable decay, in the turbulence of rival armies, each striving to set its own general, with the insolence of military success, at the head of the State. Vespasian had marched as far as Cæsarea, on his way to Jerusalem, when tidings came of the death of Nero; and before Titus returned with the spoils of the Holy City to Rome three other emperors had successively died violent deaths—Galba, Otho, Vitellius—each owing their rise to the efforts of rival armies to make themselves and their commanders arbiters of the world, and massacring their lawful emperors and fellow-citizens in the lust for power and bloodshed. When the military power of Rome had come to that, her ultimate doom was sealed, though for centuries after she dragged on a lingering existence, slowly falling into decay beneath the vices and violence of her own children and the attacks of new tribes unvitiated by the corruptions of the old world from without.

The very years that saw the end of Jerusalem saw the beginning of the end of Rome. They were the *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος*—the "consummation of the age" which had been allotted to each to play its part upon the earth—the winding up of the Church and the State of the old world.

With Jerusalem this was incontestably the case. At the end of it the Holy City was a heap of stones, and the temple a mass of smoking ruins. The lesson of her fall

is so clear and so well known that there is no need to write it o'er again, or recapitulate the nameless horrors and tragedies of that awful siege.

It is computed that in the three and a half years which elapsed between the first revolt against Gallus and the final taking of the city no less than 1,400,000 of the Jews were put to the sword, irrespective of those who were marched to swell the conqueror's triumph behind the Ark of the Covenant and the sacred vessels, and butchered to make a Roman holiday, or died beneath the oppressions of exile and slavery.

But not to dwell upon this point, it is most necessary to see in its true light how the fall of Jerusalem and the Temple was really the making of Christianity, then just coming to the birth as a power in the world. If the reasoning attributed by Tacitus to Titus is to be believed, the victorious general thought that the destruction of the Temple would be the ruin of Christianity as well as of Judaism. It was just the contrary.

"Had the Temple survived, Christianity would most surely have been arrested in its development. The surviving Temple would have been the centre of all sorts of Judaical operations. Men would never have ceased to look upon it as the holiest place in the world, to go on pilgrimage to it, and to carry their tribute thither. The Church of Jerusalem, grouped round walls so sacred, would have continued, in virtue of its primacy, to obtain the homage of all the earth. . . . A centre of irrefragable authority . . . would have been established, and would have constituted an immense danger for the nascent Church. Separation from Judaism would have been impossible. Yet such a separation was the indispensable

condition of the existence of the new religion, just as the severing of the umbilical cord is the condition of the existence of a new being. The mother was killing the child. The Temple, on the other hand, once destroyed, the Christians thought of it no longer—soon they looked upon it as a profane place. Jesus became everything in their eyes."

Thus the death-pangs of the old world, the Judaic theocracy in its seat at Jerusalem, were the birth-throes of the new world of Christianity, the kingdom of Christ and of God.

"The Jerusalem enthusiasts who affirmed that Jerusalem was eternal at the moment when it was in flames were much nearer the truth than those who saw in them nothing but assassins. They were mistaken as to the military question, but not as to the remote religious result. Those troubled days really marked the moment when Jerusalem became the spiritual capital of the world. It was because the beloved city had the incomparable honour of having been the cradle of Christianity that she became the victim of men like John of Giskhala and Simon Bargioras, seemingly scourges of their country, really instruments of its apotheosis. These zealots, whom Josephus brands as brigands and assassins, were statesmen of the lowest order, inferior soldiers; but they lost heroically a country which could not have been saved. They pulled down a material city, but they opened up the reign of the spiritual Jerusalem."

If we have read enough of those troubled days, which we have identified with the *συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* spoken of by Christ, to form any adequate idea of the awful horrors and sufferings to which the Church and the State

of the old world were subjected, we can be at no loss to see how truly Christ described them as an ordeal by fire. There is no other expression that could portray their character with such exact fitness. In the voices of the prophets (*e.g.*, Isa. ix. 5; lxvi. 15; Mal. iii. 1–3; iv. 4), in the witness of His forerunner (Matt. iii. 10–12), in His own constant testimony to His own work, this is put prominently before the world as one chief object of the coming of Christ, "to send a fire upon the earth" (Luke xii. 49), in which all things that offend and they that do wickedly should be consumed. The figure that compared divine judgments on the earth to a fire was one so familiar to all students of the prophets that none of Christ's hearers could miss its meaning.

Fire was then, as it is to this day, the great method of refinement, purging out the dross and purifying the precious metal. It was almost the only method of sanitary purification known to the ancients. The coincidence of these functions with the work of Christ and His divine message in refining and purifying human life in the day of judgment in which He visited the world, was so exact, that prophets and apostles, and He Himself, constantly refer to it as the most expressive simile that they could find. St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 13) tells his converts that the "day shall make manifest every man's work, for it is revealed in fire, and the fire shall try (assay, δοκιμάσει) every man's work of what sort it is." And St. Peter warns them (1 Pet. iv. 12) "not to take it strangely as to the fiery burning among them, which cometh upon them for trial." "For it was time (iv. 17) that judgment should begin at the house of God." The Epistle of St. Peter appears to have been written from

Rome, and shortly before the Neronian persecutions. The warning was singularly well-timed, when the terrible persecutions and sufferings which the Christians were to undergo were impending, and the hatred of the heathen world was gathering to a head, which justified Nero's policy in victimising the Christians as scapegoats for the burning of Rome. They would indeed feel the full significance of the figure which spoke to them of a fire of trial, when in their tarred robes, tied to stakes, they were set fire to, to light the gardens of the emperor. And the fearful sufferings of that persecution, which was not confined to Rome, but spread far into the provinces, were indeed to them a fiery trial of their faith, out of which only that which was pure metal could come forth, proof against such an assay.

The Roman world had its purgation by fire, when the military license and insolence of standing armies into which the free conquering spirit of the old commonwealth had degenerated, blazed forth into a devouring flame that raged over all Italy and some of her fairest provinces. One after another four of the emperors, the commanders-in-chief of the legions to which Rome had now subjected the laws and liberties of the world, were put to violent deaths, within the months that elapsed between the march of Vespasian into Palestine at the head of the army that devastated it, and his entry into Rome as Imperator of the world. Of the corruption of society in the empress city, and the scourge which her vices laid on her own back, no words of ours can give so true a picture as the emphatic brevity of Rome's own historian.

He describes it as a period "fertile in vicissitudes,

bloody in battles, embroiled with dissensions, fierce even in its peace. Four emperors cut off with the sword. Three sets of civil wars, still more foreign, and often the two combined. Successes in the East, disasters in the West. Illyria convulsed; the Gauls wavering; Britain subdued and at once lost; the tribes of the Sarmatæ and the Sueri aroused against us; the Dacians signalised by defeats on both sides in turn; even the Parthian hosts almost marched against us by the sham of a pretended Nero. Moreover Italy was now afflicted with calamities unknown, or revived after a long course of years. Cities overwhelmed or swallowed up in the most fertile shores of Campania. Rome even laid waste with conflagrations, its most ancient shrines destroyed, the Capitol itself wrapped in flames by the hands of citizens. The rites of religion were polluted, the adulteries of the age enormous."

"The sea was crowded with exiles; the cliffs stained with massacres; Rome itself the scene of still more cruel horrors. Rank, wealth, honours, whether declined or borne, were crimes; and virtues entailed the most sure destruction. Nor were the rewards of informers less hated than their acts, when some having procured sacerdotal or consular offices as their spoils, others procuratorships and posts of more private influence, carried on and wielded all power by hate and fear. Slaves were corrupted against their masters; freedmen against their patrons; and they who had not an enemy were doomed to ruin by their friends. . . . Beside the manifold misfortunes of human life, the heaven and earth were full of prodigies, and the warnings of thunder and lightning; and prognostics, now cheering, now evil — some obscure, some

plain enough. Nor was it ever made more clear by the bloody disasters of the people of Rome, or more decisive proofs, that the gods above have no care for our protection, but only for vengeance upon us." (Tac. Hist. i. 2, 3.)

The disasters of the Jewish Church and city were more horrible and awful still. The miseries of the last siege and final destruction of Jerusalem were indeed a scene of tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world until then, nor should be again. Earthquakes, famines, and pestilences were abundant in the world of Judæa as of Italy, and were not only noted as omens of coming woes, but, by the misery and unsettlement to which they led, had doubtless much to do with bringing about the social convulsions that followed—in short, were the beginnings of travail. Events were recorded so surprising and supernatural, that whatever they really were, the minds of men were undoubtedly impressed with belief that they were signs that "the constitution of nature was confounded for the destruction of men; and one might easily conjecture that no common calamities were portended."

Among the wretched Jews the spirit of blind fury and insane dissension seems to have entered in and taken possession, goading them on to court their own ruin and compass their own perdition, in utter madness of self-destruction. With seemingly frantic perverseness they flung themselves forward to court the vengeance of their enemies, while the most ordinary measures of self-preservation were neglected, and nothing that could ensure disaster was left undone. Without Jerusalem, the relentless approach of Rome's ruthless legions was drawing

nearer and nearer; and within, blind party spirit, intensified with all the bitterness of religious hatred, goaded them into the madness of faction fights, till the streets of Zion ran down with the blood of her own children, slain by each other's hands; and the nameless horrors of war, waged with all the brutality of a barbarous age, were multiplied tenfold by the insane strife of faction among themselves.

"The sufferings of the inhabitants were such as it is not possible to tell. . . . If there was to be seen so much as the shadow of food, there was war, men contending with them that were dearest unto them. And necessity compelled them to eat all manner of things, so that they would gather for themselves even such as the vilest of brutes use not: until the matron of a noble house and wealthy, when no man would slay her either for anger or pity, and she was grievously tormented with hunger, did a horrible deed and contrary to nature. For she caught up the sucking child that she had, and roasted his flesh; and having eaten the half of it herself, put by that which was left"—a literal fulfilment of Deut. xxviii. 49–58. At last, when resistance was hopeless, and all offers of capitulation spurned, Titus ordered fire to be put to the gates, which spread quickly to the cloisters, and all day and night the fire burned.

"And Titus was of a mind to have spared the Temple. But the Jews, who had been driven into the inner court, set again upon the Romans in the outer court, who were seeking to quench the burning of the cloisters. These putting the Jews to flight, came in their pursuit as far as the inner court. Whereupon a certain soldier cast a torch which he had caught up from the burning through

a door in the wall, without any commandment given, but, as it would seem, by a certain divine inspiration. And the fire rose up forthwith, and Titus ran with all speed to the Temple, if he might hinder the burning. But the commands of Titus they heard not, but cast firebrands on to that which was not yet burning, and slaughtered multitudes, so that the dead bodies were piled against the altar, and the blood flowed down the steps of the Temple. At last a certain soldier thrust a lighted torch into the Holy of Holies, whereupon the flame rose up in a moment, and Titus and his captains were driven perforce out of the place."

"And while the Temple was burning the soldiers ceased not to slay all whom they met; nor had they pity for youth, or reverence for old age, but put both old and young, people and priests, to the sword. As for the Temple and the hill whereon it stood, the ground could not be seen for dead bodies. And there remained one cloister of the outer court in which were gathered many women and children, and a mixed multitude of men, 6000 in all; and to this, before Titus gave any commandment, the soldiers in their fury set fire, and these all perished. Then the soldiers searched through the lanes of the city, slaying all whom they met; and they burnt with fire many houses, with such as were therein. And in many of the houses, when they had gone into them for plunder, they found whole families dead of hunger; but they had no compassion on the living, but slew them without mercy, till the streets were piled up with dead bodies. This they did till nightfall, and during the night the flames prevailed against the city, so that it was consumed altogether."

"Many thousands were taken captive, and of them all that were of seventeen years and upwards were sent to work in the mines of Egypt, but many were sent into the provinces to be slain by the sword and by wild beasts in the theatre. The soldiers slew the old men and the weak, but a great multitude perished of hunger. Titus, ere he returned, kept the birthdays of his father and of his brother, and, as was the custom of the Romans at those feasts, he caused a great multitude of the Jews to be slain, constraining them to fight with each other or with wild beasts."

Such is the graphic account of Josephus condensed, and his own moral may fitly conclude the extracts.

"Whoever will note these things may know that God hath a care for men, and showeth them beforehand such things as concern their welfare, and that if they perish, they perish from their own madness and the evil of their own choosing."

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